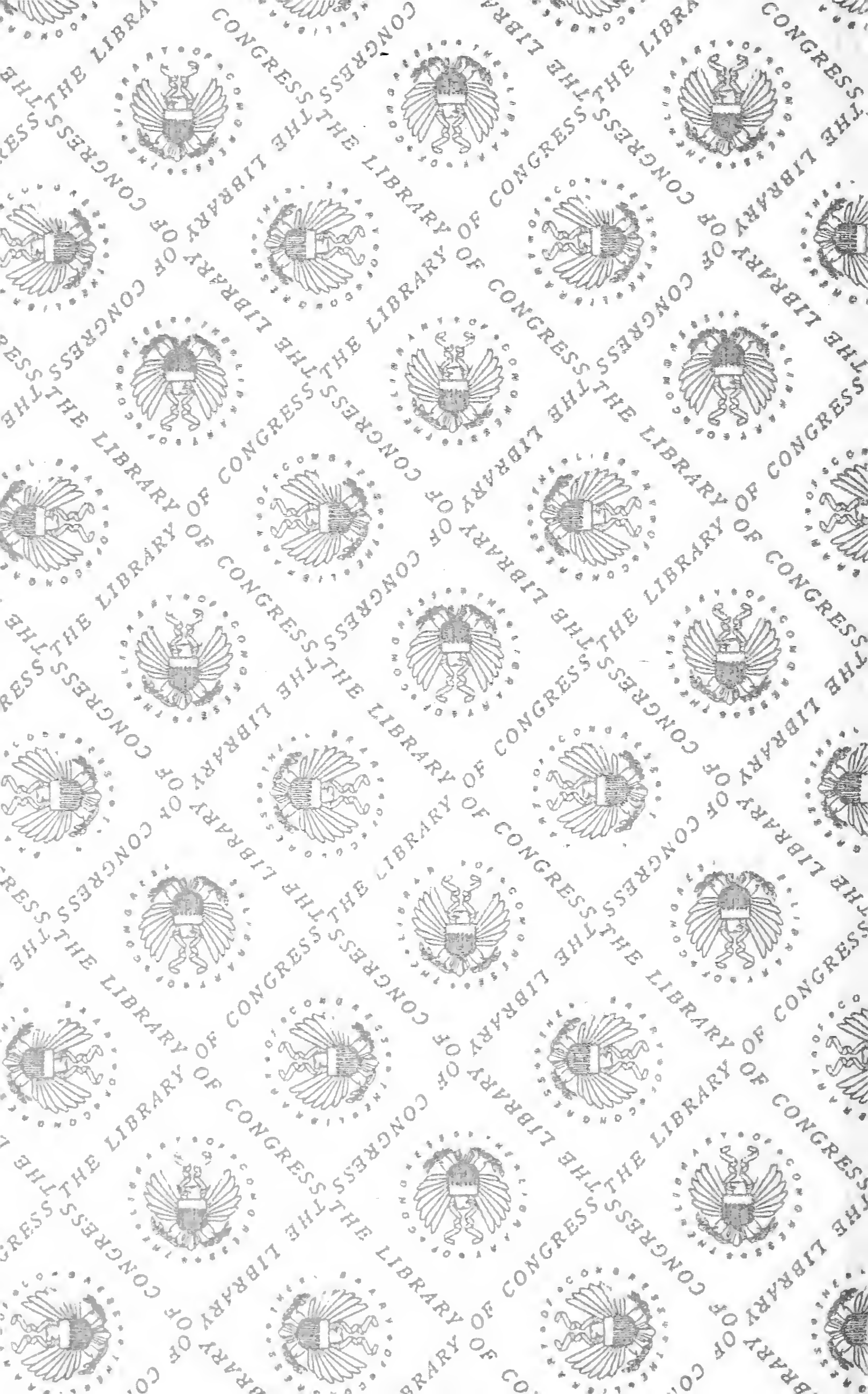

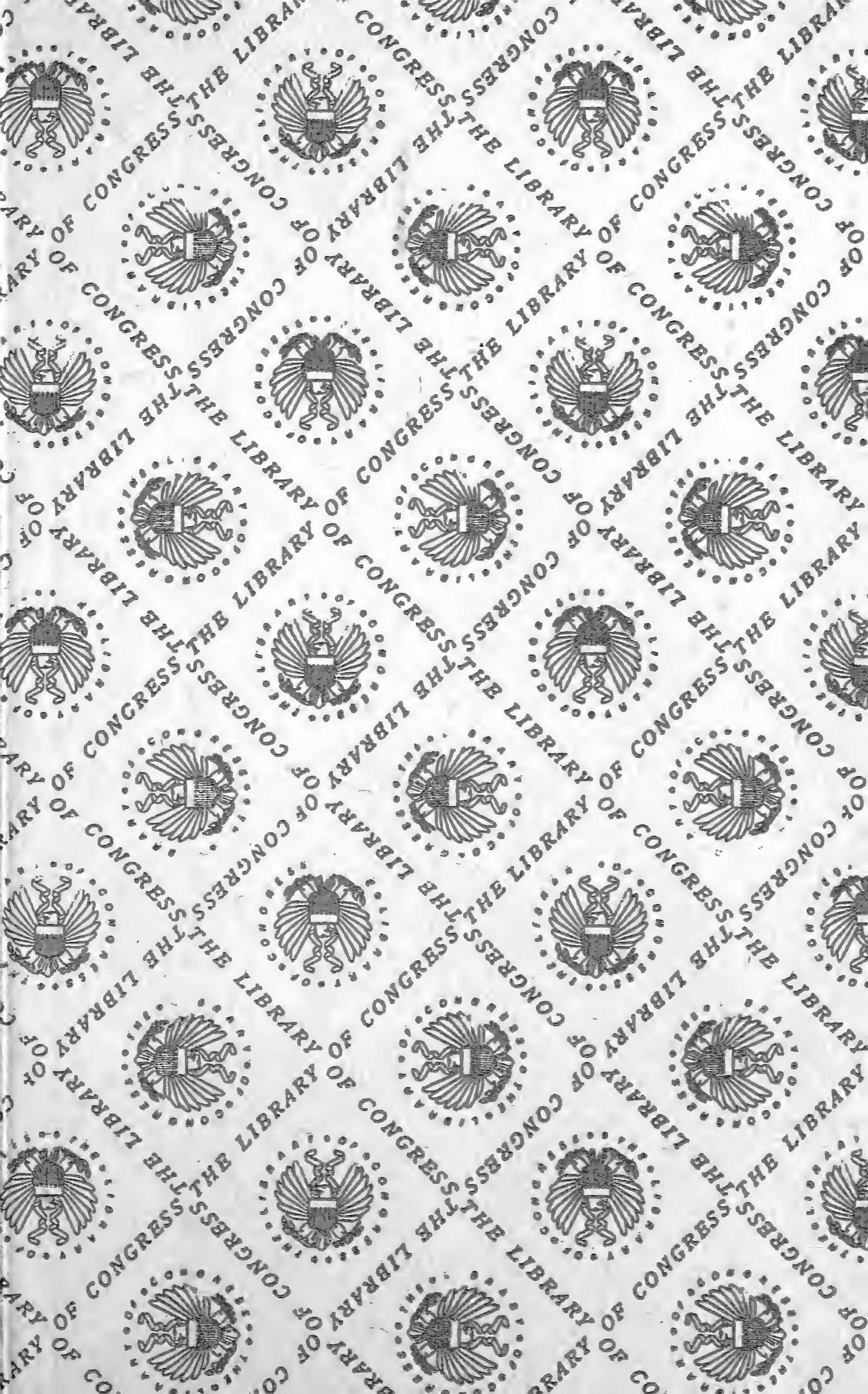

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In Oldest England

HAROLD'S LAST STAND AT SENLAC.

In Oldest England

BY

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TO
HAROLD AND JACK
AND CECIL AND JANE

PREFACE

To-day all we know about the men and women who lived in oldest England we learn from the manuscripts which their scribes wrote. From these writings we know many facts of their time and many things about their manner of living. But we need more than facts, we need imagination to realize fully how people lived a thousand or more years ago. The men and women who dwelt in oldest England were the ancestors of the English people of to-day. They were not their great-grandfathers, however, nor yet their great-great-grandfathers. One would need to repeat the word "great" twenty or thirty times before one arrived at a name which reached far enough back to apply to the Englishmen who lived in England in the times of King Alfred. But though these founders of the English race lived so many generations ago, it would be a great mistake to think of them as altogether savage and uncivilized. They knew nothing about electricity and steam engines and airships, and many other remarkable inventions that we know about. It is well to remember, however, that the real test of a people's civilization is not to be found in the amount of machinery they possess, but in the thoughts and affections which go to make up their characters. And different as the surroundings of their lives were from our own, as one comes to

know these Englishmen of oldest England better, one sees that after all they were laying the foundations of character which Englishmen to-day are still building upon. They were learning how to live peaceably and justly with each other, how to conquer the bad sides of their natures and how to cultivate the good. They never learned to do this completely, but for that we dare not judge them harshly, since their descendants to-day still have many lessons of charity and justice to learn. The world grows better slowly but surely, and a thousand years in the life of a nation is not a long time. It is well, therefore, that we should know as much about the past of our race as we can, and that we should go back in our study of its history as far as possible. For the more we know about the past, the more certainly we shall be able to judge of the present and to plan for the future.

The illustrations at the heads of chapters which represent scenes from country life for the various seasons of the year are reproduced from an English manuscript of the eleventh century, as are several illustrations in the text. The colored illustrations are reproduced by permission from the excellent historical pictures by Mr. H. J. Ford.

NEW YORK, 1912.

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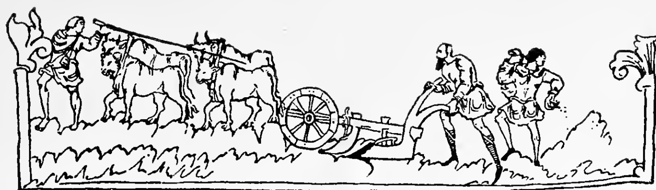


IN OLDEST ENGLAND

I

HOW THE ENGLISH CAME TO ENGLAND

This book tells the story of the beginnings of the English people. It tells how, a thousand years before Columbus discovered America, a few tribes of bold sea-rovers sailed away in their ships from their old home in the northwestern part of Germany, how they came to the island of Britain, and how they gradually built up a new and great nation in the country which they conquered. They were few in numbers and weak when they first settled in Britain, but from these small beginnings the whole of the British Empire, with colonies that now encircle the globe, has developed. And not only the British Empire, but also the great American Republic, must seek for its beginnings in the conquests of this little band of adventurers who first landed on the English coast fifteen hundred years ago. Wherever the English speech is now spoken, in London or in Calcutta, in Cape Town or in Montreal, in Boston or in San Francisco, there the people are held together by the strong bonds of kinship, and still more by the fact that they all inherit many of their

laws and customs from the humble and long-past beginnings of the race in oldest England.

Long before the English came to Britain, the island was known to men, and its fertile parts were cultivated, its tin mines were worked, and its cities were crowded with busy people. The English first came to England as emigrants and settlers, and then finally as conquerors, in the same way that the Americans first came to America. But there was a great difference between England before the English came to that country and America before the Pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth and the southern colonists landed at Jamestown. For England was not then occupied, as America was at the time of its settlement, by a race of rude and uncivilized savages. On the contrary, when the English first came to England, the country was inhabited by a much more highly civilized people than the English themselves were. It was a province of the Romans, one of the most highly civilized peoples the world has ever known. For nearly five centuries the Romans had been masters there, and they were a rich and powerful people. In the days of the Romans the island naturally was not called England, because this is a name which comes from the name of the English people. The Romans spoke the Latin language, and therefore the name they gave to the island was the Latin word Britannia, from which comes our modern name of Britain.

The famous Roman general, Julius Cæsar, was one of the first of the Romans to come to Britain. He

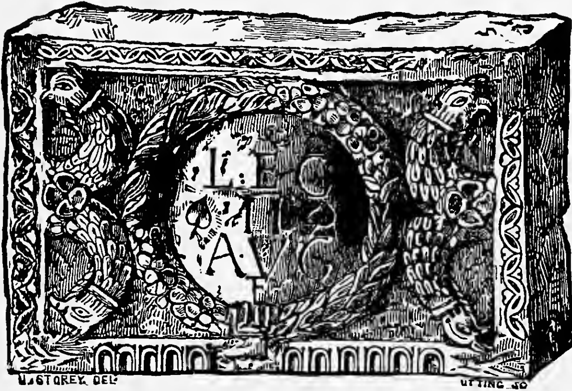
THE LANDING OF THE ROMANS IN BRITAIN

brought over an army from Gaul, where he was waging war, in the summer of 55 B. C., and another again in the following summer, and from the time of these first visits of Julius Cæsar, the island of Britain became subject to the great Roman Empire. Gradually the Romans built strong forts here and there to keep the country in order. They also built roads leading from one section of the country to another, some parts of which are in use to this present day; and they built towns, also, at advantageous places, and villas and temples and baths such as they were familiar with in Italy. Roman ships came to British harbors, carrying away grain, tin, wool and other products of the land, and leaving in exchange wine, building materials and manufactured articles from the home country.

For four hundred years Britain was a busy and strongly defended Roman colony. Then suddenly all this Roman civilization in Britain came to an end; and the reason was this very simple one, that the Roman Empire was no longer able to keep soldiers in its colonies to protect them. At the beginning of the fifth century, the Roman Empire was almost as wide as the known world. Its colonies stretched from Britain, the most western part of Europe, across the Continent, including Germany, Gaul or France, and Spain, and even beyond the limits of Europe into Asia. Wherever there was prospect of gain or glory, there the Roman soldier had penetrated, bringing with him his Roman eagle and establishing the rights of Roman citizenship. To defend all these scattered pos-

sessions, the Romans had built up a vast and costly military system. Roman civilization always followed in the wake of the Roman legions, and the legions always remained to protect the Roman citizens.

Such was the state of Rome's greatness when, suddenly and unexpectedly, the mighty empire was attacked where it least expected it. It was attacked at its very heart, at the city of Rome itself. From the



A Roman Commemorative Tablet

forests and fastnesses of northern Europe, remote and barbarous regions that had never been entered by the Roman legionaries, hordes of eager, greedy, relentless Huns and Vandals poured down over the Alps and on the fertile plains of northern Italy. Hurriedly the Empire answered to the call of danger and summoned home now this legion, now that from the outlying colonies. But the danger at home instead of lessening grew greater and greater, until finally the city of Rome itself was entered and sacked by the barbarians. In this state of affairs plainly the only

thing for the Romans to do was to give up their colonies and concentrate all their forces for the defense of Italy. The legions in Britain were called home, and the Emperor Honorius, in the year 410, wrote a letter to the people of Britain, saying that Rome could do nothing for them, and that they must henceforth care for their own defense.

Now who were the enemies that the people of Britain were thus told to defend themselves against? They were none other than the descendants of the original inhabitants of Britain who had held the island before the coming of the Romans. These original nations were of the Celtic race, and it was only after long and bitter fighting with them that the Romans had managed to get a firm foothold on British soil. And they never succeeded in completely conquering and exterminating the Celts. Some of the Celts doubtless settled down in the Roman towns and became either Roman slaves or Roman citizens; but by far the greater number fled into the inaccessible mountainous regions of Wales and of Scotland, and there they defended their homes and their freedom during all the time the Romans were in Britain. The Romans built great walls in the north of Britain, all the way across the land, from one seacoast to the other, to keep back their Celtic enemies, and the chief business of the Roman legions, so long as they remained in Britain, was to protect the people of the towns from the attacks of these barbarous but courageous Celts.

With the departure of the Roman legions, the Celts

immediately began to swarm down from their mountain retreats in Scotland and Wales upon the towns and plains of the Romanized parts of Britain. In the four hundred years of their rule in Britain the Romans had become a rich and luxurious people, and the starved Celts from the mountains were eager to get their hands on some of the Roman plunder. What now were the Roman inhabitants of Britain to do? They were not fighters; they had always left that for the legions to do. They made appeal after appeal to Rome, "the groans of the Britons" they were called. They told how the barbarians from the mountains drove them down to the sea, and how the sea drove them back into the hands of the barbarians, and on either side they found nothing but death. But Rome had all she could do to attend to her own affairs, and the groans of the Britons received no answer.

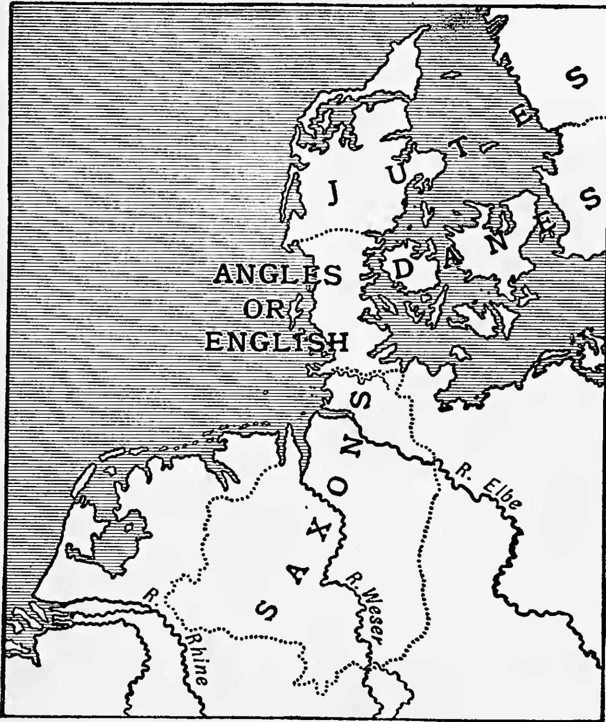
At last, in an evil hour for them, the Britons thought of a way out of their difficulties. They thought of a remedy which, though they little knew it, was in the end to prove far worse than their disease. In a word, their remedy was this: They had long been familiar with the warlike prowess of certain tribes of north Germany, for these tribes had occasionally attempted to make piratical attacks upon Britain. They had always been driven back by the legionaries, but the Roman Britons had thus learned that these barbarous Teutons knew how to fight, even though they were unfamiliar with Roman methods and Roman military discipline. In the difficult position in which they were now placed, the thoughts of

the poor Britons turned to these German tribes and they decided to invite them to come over to England to help them subdue the Celts. Vortigern was the name of the ruler of the Roman Britons at this time, and he it was who sent the invitation over to the Continent.

Vortigern's invitation was readily accepted by the Teutons, for fighting was the main business of their lives. Under the leadership of two captains, one named Hengest and the other Horsa, the first companies of them came over to Britain in the year 449, and landed on the island of Thanet, near the coast of Kent. For a time they were true to their agreement with the Britons. They fought with them against the Celts and helped to drive the Celts back into their mountain fastnesses. But in the meantime the Teutons were looking about and observing things for themselves. Their own country was not to be compared with what they saw here in Britain. They wondered at the richness of this land, with its fertile fields and luxurious cities, and then at the weakness of the people who owned it, but were not strong enough to protect it. Finally they said to themselves that there was no reason why they should not possess all this wealth as their own. Immediately they sent back word to their friends and kinsmen on the Continent that they should come over and help them, and that together they would share the rich booty. The plot was completely successful. The Teutonic people did come over from their Continental home in greater numbers, and combining forces with those al-

ready in Britain, they fought against both Britons and Celts.

These Teutonic invaders came mainly from three tribes—the Angles, the Jutes and the Saxons. Their home on the Continent had been in the northwestern



The Old Homes of the English

part of Germany and in Jutland, which is now part of the kingdom of Denmark, and they not only lived near to each other, but were closely related in blood. They were members of the great Teutonic race which already at that time was spread over all central and northern Europe. And since the Angles and Saxons were the two most important of these tribes, these

Teutonic invaders of Britain are often grouped together under the general name of Anglo-Saxons. But a better name for them is the English, for this is the name by which they soon learned to call themselves after they had settled down in Britain, and the name by which their descendants have been known ever since. And then their land, too, was called England, or "land of the Angles," as it is to this day.

But before all this took place the Angles and Jutes and Saxons had to wrest this land out of the hands of the Britons and Celts. These two peoples, the Britons and Celts, who before had been deadly enemies, now made common cause against the common foe. United they proved to be almost a match for the invaders. Battle after battle was fought, and now one side was victorious and now the other. According to old legends, the Britons were led by their greatest warrior, King Arthur. Unfortunately, very little is known about King Arthur that can be regarded as fact. Many stories have grown up around his name, stories of his knights and of his Round Table, and of all his own adventures. But these stories and romances were not told until a much later date than the time at which he was engaged in trying to protect Britain from the attacks of the heathen Angles and Saxons. All we really know is that there was a King Arthur, that he fought courageously against the enemies of his country, but that he failed in the end, and that both Roman and Celtic Britain passed into the hands of the Teutonic invaders from

THE ROMAN WALL.

the Continent, in the possession of whose descendants it has remained ever since.

Thus it was that the English, a rude and uncivilized race, still worshiping their heathen gods and goddesses, left their old homes in northern Germany for what seemed to them a happier and better country. They came over first to help the Britons, but they remained to help themselves. Might made right for them; they were thorough barbarians, caring nothing for all the refinements and luxuries of life with which the Romans had surrounded themselves. They came as destroyers, and before their fierce onslaughts the whole structure of Roman civilization in Britain went to pieces. And the story of the English in England is the story of how they gradually and slowly built up a new civilization of their own to take the place of that which they destroyed.

II

THE FIRST ENGLISH HOMES

If the first Teutonic invaders of Britain who came over in the time of Hengest and Horsa were given their proper name, they would have to be called pirates, for pirates they were to all intents and purposes. They came to Britain with no other intention than to carry off as much plunder as possible. They knew no law except the law of might, and a rich people who were weak, like the Britons, seemed fair game to them. At first, when they had filled their ships with booty, they sailed back to their old homes on the Continent, there to enjoy it. After a time, however, it occurred to them that they might take the lands of the Britons as well as their other possessions, and so they changed from mere marauders and plunderers to permanent settlers in the country.

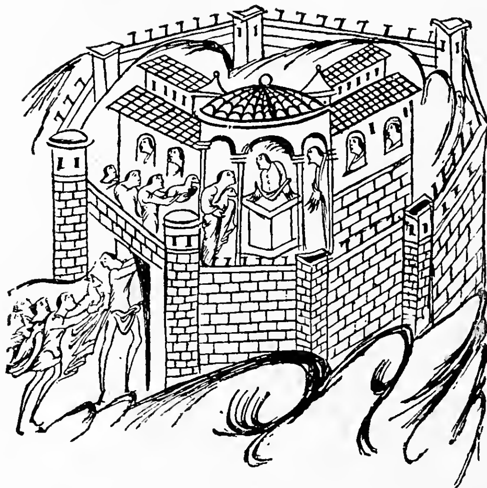
As they settled down in their new homes, the English brought over with them all the customs and habits with which they had been familiar in north Germany. They paid very little attention to the Britons, except to drive them out or to make slaves of them,

and consequently, although the Britons were much more highly civilized than were these first barbarous English, the English learned very little from them. The Romans had built large towns, with high brick or stone walls around them, and in these towns they had cultivated all the arts and luxuries of town life. But the English did not like to live in towns. Like their ancestors in the German forests, they preferred to live scattered and apart, wherever a spring or a grove or an open field or some other natural advantage struck their fancy. Thus the old Roman towns fell into neglect and soon became waste and desolate. It was only after a long time that some of them, like the town of Chester, where the Roman walls are still to be seen, were occupied again; but most of the old Roman towns were deserted and abandoned, and if they have not completely disappeared, have left only scanty ruins to mark their sites.

Neither did the early English use brick and stone in building their houses, as the Romans had done. The first English houses were rudely and roughly constructed, not because the English could not have had better houses, but because it had not yet occurred to them that they needed better. The roof was covered with a thatch, and since all the rest of the building was made of wood, and since the fire was built right in the center of the room, with a hole in the roof for the smoke to escape, burning down was the usual fate of old English houses. This, however, was not such a terrible disaster, since it was comparatively easy to build another house. There was not a great deal of

difference between the houses of the rich and the poor, and the house of a king or a prince differed from that of a man in more humble station mainly in being somewhat larger. Luxuries were not to be had among the earliest English, no matter how rich or powerful you were.

The early English did not like to live close together, but instead each family, or a small group of families,

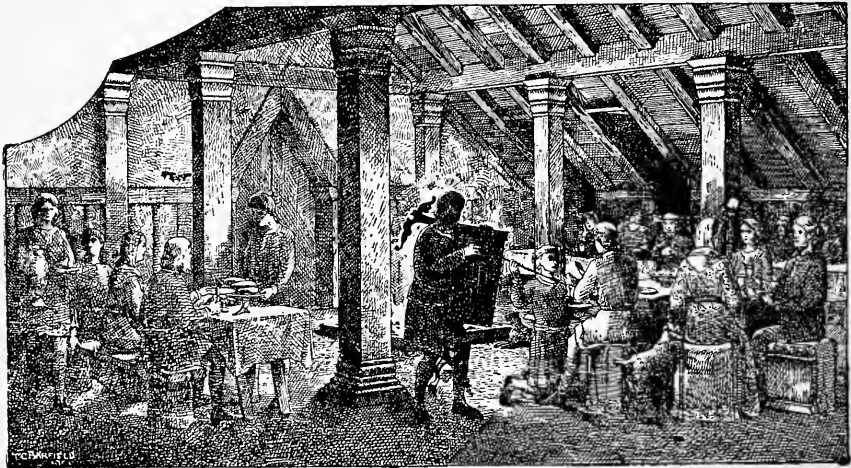


A Saxon House

went off by itself to the place it liked best. In building homes for themselves these separate families, or small tribes, arranged everything about a main central building called "the hall." In the hall the men feasted and boasted of their deeds of prowess and listened to the songs of their minstrels. Every family or tribe had at its head a leader, or atheling, as he was called, who was the lord of the hall and who was followed wherever he went by his supporters and

those who helped in the defense of his home. These followers of the atheling were usually younger and unmarried warriors, and they were known as the atheling's companions or thanes. Now, when these companions were not off with the atheling fighting, they lived in the hall, sleeping or hunting, or otherwise amusing themselves by day, and feasting and drinking and listening to the songs of the minstrel by night. For the serious business of these thanes was fighting, and that was the only work in life which they considered equal to their dignity. It was the duty of the atheling to see to it that they were provided with food and clothing, as well as with sword and shield and coat of linked mail, and all the other necessities of a well-armed soldier. The atheling is thus often called by the poets "the dispenser of treasure," or "the giver of rings," since in the very earliest times the money of the English was not made into coins, but was twisted into rings or bracelets. The atheling's throne was for the same reason called "the gift-stool," and there was no worse reputation for an atheling to have than that of being stingy. On the other hand, the atheling's companions had certain standards which they also had to live up to. Above all they must be brave and must follow their atheling wherever he led them. The greatest disgrace that could befall an atheling's companion was to come out of a battle alive in which his leader had been slain. It was the thane's duty to fight beside his atheling as long as his atheling was living, and after that to continue fighting to avenge his atheling's death and to keep him company

to the bitter end on the field of battle. Thus it happened that in early English times a fight to the finish meant a fight which could end only with the extermination of one of the two sides. "Now that my lord has fallen," says one of the heroes in the poem on the Battle of Maldon, "steadfast warriors at home shall not twit me with words, saying that I turned from the battle; but the weapon shall take me, the steel with its



FEASTING IN THE HALL

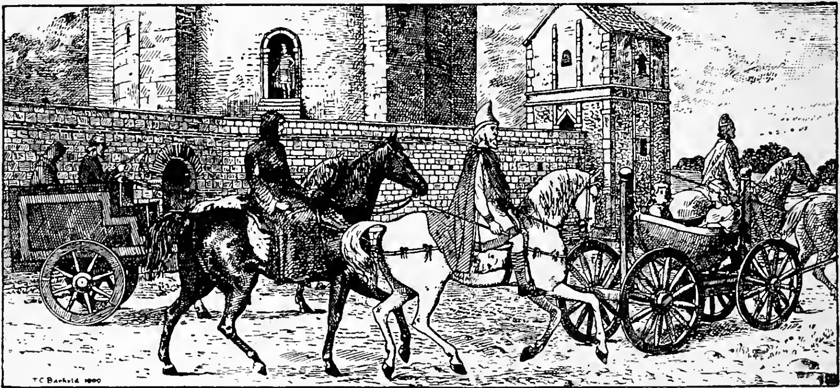
point." And thus these warriors fought on, until one after the other fell, and all lay, as the poem says, "thane-like beside their lord."

The hall was the center of the early Englishman's home, and around it were clustered various buildings for the use of the other members of his tribe or family. There was first of all the bower, in which the atheling's wife lived with her attendant women, as the atheling and his companions lived in the hall. Then there were other buildings in which the slaves

and servants dwelt, stables for the horses, cattle and swine, storehouses for the grain and other food, and all the many buildings and implements which people need when they have only themselves to depend on for the necessities of life. The whole group of buildings, hall, bower, slave quarters, and all, was then surrounded by a stockade, with an entrance gate, to protect it against sudden attack, and the whole was called "a town." Now the word town meant first of all merely a stockade, and the earliest English towns consisted of nothing more than the group of buildings belonging to an atheling's household. Only gradually and slowly, as a number of people came to live together within the same stockade, did anything like our modern notion of a town or city come into being.

Within the stockade which surrounded the atheling's buildings, it was an interesting and varied life which the people lived. The chief work of the atheling and his companions, as has been said, was to do the fighting for the family, and when they were not away on some expedition, they spent their time at home enjoying themselves in the hall. But the other people of "the town" had plenty to do to provide themselves and the warriors with food and clothing and other necessary things. They had to care for the cattle and other live stock on the atheling's lands; they had to till the soil, spin the flax into linen and the wool into cloth, bake the bread and roast the meat, and above all, brew the ale which was needed in such quantities for the nightly feasts that took place in the great hall. Everything had to be done at home, for

there were no markets to go to and no stores with obliging keepers eager to exchange their wares for money. In fact, there was very little money of any kind in the country, and if you were an atheling's thane, you fought for your atheling not mainly for money, but for your place in the hall at the atheling's table; and if you were a poor man or a slave, you toiled for the atheling, again not for payment in



ANGLO-SAXON CARRIAGES

money, but for bed and board and protection from other athelings, and for the little share of the luxuries of life that might happen to come to such humble people.

Usually an atheling gained his position because he was an exceptionally strong and brave man. It was easy for a good leader to gather a number of companions about him, and then he was ready to go out in search of the place where he wanted to live. If he found somebody else already living there, then it was a question as to which of the two was the stronger.

Having chosen or seized a place in which to settle, gradually the atheling built up his town and prepared to defend it against all other athelings. It did not take the English long to realize, however, that this way of living, whereby each atheling was completely independent and self-protecting, was not the best way. They soon found out that strength comes from union, and that they needed some rules and laws by which to govern themselves. They accordingly did two things; they established a parliament, or a legislature, which they called "the meeting of the wise men," and they elected kings for themselves. Now the kings that were chosen were elected by the free consent of the athelings, and it was usually the most powerful of the athelings who was selected to be king. The king did not have any absolute power, but he could do only what the meeting of the wise men permitted him to do. And if at any time his conduct was not satisfactory to the wise men, they could remove the king from office and elect another atheling in his place. The king was usually a rich man with towns at various places, and he consequently traveled about a good deal, living now at one of his towns and now at another.

In the earliest times the English had a large number of kings. Any group of athelings who wanted to do so could come together and elect a king, the athelings thus becoming the thanes of the king. Then the king and his thanes could go out and fight against other kings; if they were successful, thus extending the bounds of their kingdom, or, if they were defeated, extending the bounds of the other king's king-

dom. In this way gradually the smaller kingdoms were united to the larger and stronger. One of the first strong kingdoms to be formed was the kingdom of Kent, where the English first landed. Another was the kingdom of the West Saxons, south of the river Thames. To the north of the Thames a number of kingdoms were formed, the largest being the kingdom of Northumbria, which was sometimes divided into two kingdoms, Deira and Bernicia. Another kingdom north of the Thames was the kingdom of Mercia, and still another was known as East Anglia. At times the king of one of these kingdoms becoming stronger than the kings of the other countries, the rest pledged a kind of obedience to the strong king. But there was continual fighting and rivalry, and now one king and now another got the upper hand. For three centuries after the English first came to England this state of affairs existed, until finally Egbert, the grandfather of King Alfred, who was king of the West Saxons, gained a control over the other kings of England which really amounted to something. Gradually as the other kings died, no one was elected to succeed them, and beginning with King Alfred the English have had not many kings, but one king. Thus in Alfred's time the whole country was united into one, and all people who called themselves English acknowledged the authority of one king. Alfred's laws were also acknowledged by all the English, and so at last these English who had started out practically as lawless pirates, each independent of the other, in the end banded together and worked out a system of law

and government which has remained in force, changing and growing, to the present day.

When the English came to England they brought little with them besides their ships, their swords and their shields. They brought no books and no means of making books. For writing was to them practically an unknown art. They could carve runic letters on tablets of wood, or on stone, or on the blade of a sword, but no one ever thought of sitting down and writing a book with a pen. Instead of written books, however, they had spoken books. The minstrels could tell long stories about the deeds of the older heroes of the race, how Beowulf killed the dragon, and how this hero was slain here and that one there. This was the only kind of history they knew. Men remembered what their fathers had told them, and thus from father to son the lore of the folk was passed on by word of mouth. Not the least important part of this lore was the religion which the English brought with them to England. This was a religion which for generations had been practiced by the Teutons in the forests of Germany. It was a heathen religion, and instead of one God, it worshiped at the altars of many gods. One of the greatest of these gods was named Thor, the god of war. The English gave him a special day, and that is how the fifth day of the week gets its name, Thor's day. Another powerful god was named Woden, and he also gives his name to a day of the week, Woden's day becoming Wednesday. The Teutons also worshiped a goddess named Freia, and from her name we get the word Friday. In the

same way the name Tuesday comes from the name of a heathen god. But these are only a few of the many Teutonic gods and goddesses. Almost every spring and every grove was supposed to have its own special divinity. The early English were very simple and childlike in their faith; almost like savages, they believed that spirits dwelt in trees and stones and in all the forms of nature. Priests were chosen to care for the ceremonies of their religion, but these ceremonies were all simple and rude. Among others, there was this great difference between the priests of the heathen religion and the priests of the Christian religion with which the English were soon to become acquainted, that the heathen priests were not learned men themselves, and so could not become teachers and leaders of the people as the Christian priests later became. The temples and altars which the first English consecrated for the uses of their heathen religion were likewise very rude affairs. These places of worship were probably not much more than little wooden huts, very roughly and crudely ornamented. In these temples the shrines or altars were placed, and the whole was surrounded by a kind of fence, forming thus a sacred inclosure. The heathen English had two main purposes in worshiping their gods. The first was the wish to pacify them because the worshipers were afraid of them. They thought of their gods as powerful beings who, when angry, brought about all sorts of loss and misfortune. By all means, therefore, it was advisable to keep on the safe side of the gods. The second purpose which they had in worshiping

their gods was to get something out of them. Being very powerful, the gods could give very rich gifts, if they felt so inclined. If you wished your fields to raise big crops, you must make an offering to the gods who had charge of fields and crops. When your bees were about to swarm, it was advisable to intercede with the gods of the bees that the swarm might not

SAXON HORSEMEN

go too far from home. If some of your cattle had strayed away or had been stolen, the gods were to be called upon to help bring them back again. If you had a sudden pain in the side, you might know that an evil spirit of some kind had lodged itself there. Whatever happened the heathen English were convinced that some god or other had a hand in it, and the main uses of their religion were to ward off the anger of these gods and to secure their good will.

Half-civilized as they were at the time of their first

coming to England, the English were not altogether without good qualities. They were fond of fighting, and were not much troubled by scruples of conscience when they saw a chance to gain possession of their enemies' property. But they were brave as lions and loyal to each other, and they followed their leaders faithfully and unselfishly. They knew little about books and writing or about the deeper mysteries of life. But the reason for this was that they had had very little opportunity of learning. And when, with the coming of the Roman missionaries to England, they were finally given the chance to learn and to work out better ways of living, the readiness with which they accepted the new teaching proves that their minds were prepared for it. By the end of the second century after they had come to England as a wild and barbarous race, the English had accepted Christianity and had developed a peaceful and settled government of their own. And by the end of the third century they began to send forth from their schools teachers, like Bede and Alcuin, who were not only known in England, but whose fame was equal to that of any of the great men of Europe in that day.

III

HOW THE ENGLISH BECAME CHRISTIANS

On a certain day something over a hundred years after the English had settled in England, and when Rome was again mistress of herself, though now shorn of much of her greatness through the loss of her colonies, a thoughtful but kindly looking man might have been seen wandering through the streets of the Eternal City. He was humbly dressed, like a monk, but wherever he passed he was followed by glances of love and veneration. In his aimless wanderings, he finally came to the market place of the city. The square was filled with buyers and sellers, and where the walks were not crowded with people, they were blocked with great heaps of merchandise from all corners of the earth. But apparently this monk had not come to the market to buy. He amused himself by glancing at the display of wares which the merchants had cunningly set out to catch the eye, but none were cunning enough to tempt him to the desire of possession.

At length, however, the monk came to something in the market which did arrest his attention. He came to that part of the market where slaves were sold, and there was a dealer with a group of slave boys whom he was offering up for sale. The monk stopped and gazed pityingly at the boys. They were all strong, sturdy lads, with fair complexions, light yellow hair, and the bluest of blue eyes, in every way different from the brown cheeks and brown eyes and black hair that one usually saw in the streets of Rome. The monk looked at the boys kindly for some time, and then he turned to the dealer and asked him what religion these boys followed. When the dealer told him that they were heathen, then the monk sighed and said: "Alas, that the prince of darkness should have power over such bright faces!" And then he said to the dealer, "What is the name of the race to which they belong?" "They are Angles," the dealer answered. And then the monk, playing on the words, said, "They are well named Angles, for they have Angels' faces. And what is the name of the country from which they come?" The dealer replied, "Their country is called Deira."* Now this word looks as though it was made up of the two Latin words, *de*, meaning "from," and *ira*, meaning "wrath." But of course it is not, and the resemblance is merely accidental. "Good again," replied the monk, who of course spoke in Latin, "their country is called Deira, because they shall be saved from wrath, and be

* This was the name of one of the kingdoms of northern England.

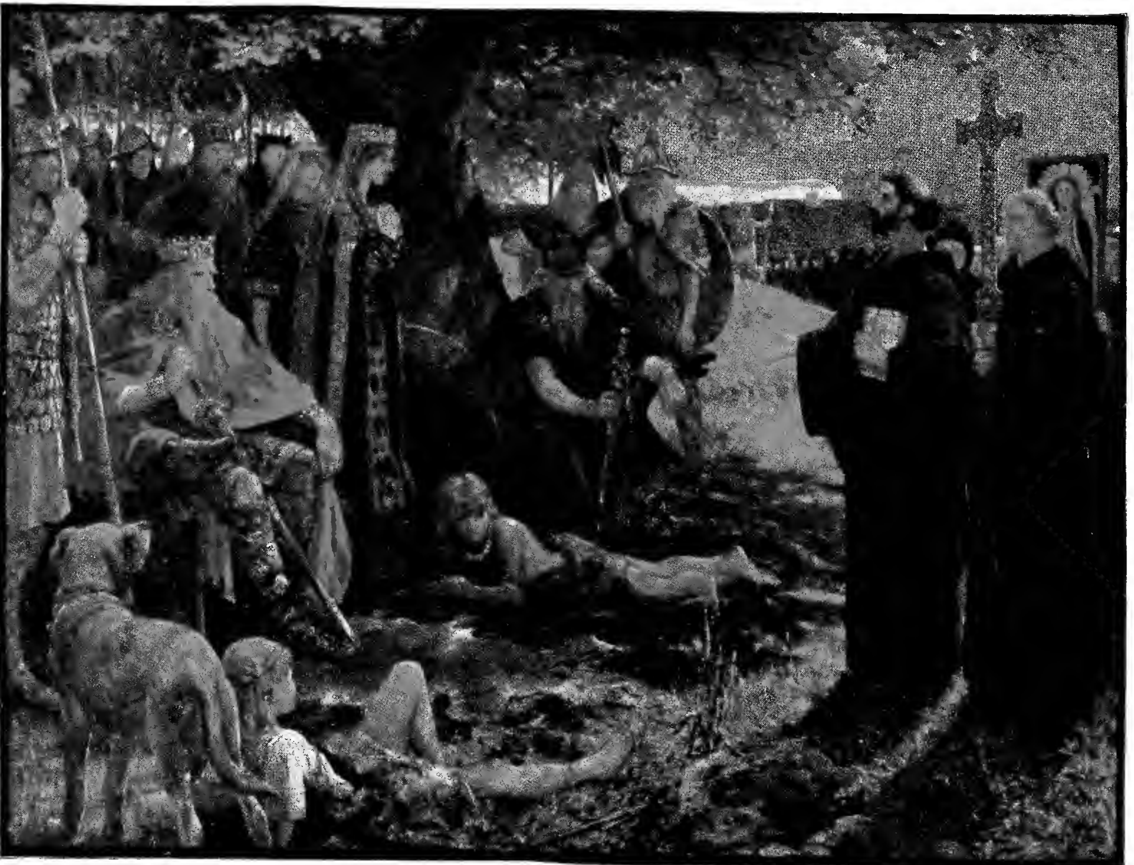
brought into God's mercy. And now tell me, what is their king's name?" "His name is Alle," was the dealer's answer. And at that the monk, still playing on words, cried out, "Then shall his people learn to sing Alleluia in honor of God their Creator." Having learned all the slave-dealer could tell him about the pretty English boys, the monk passed on his way, but not, as will be seen, to forget what he had just heard and beheld.

Now the name of this monk was Gregory, and he was a well-known person in Rome. Though now he dressed himself in the poorest of garments and ate but the plainest of fare, this had not always been the kind of life he had lived. For he was the son of a rich and noble Roman, and in his youth had taken great pleasure in adorning himself with costly silks and satins and with all manner of precious jewels. But suddenly his eyes were opened to the poverty and sorrow that surrounded him on every side. With Gregory to see was to act, and straightway he turned all his riches to the service of the poor and to the building of monasteries where monks might be trained for the service of God and of man. Gregory himself went to live in one of these monasteries, and he was as simple in his life and as earnest in good works as the humblest of them all. Every day he provided a dinner for twelve poor men, himself waiting on the men and caring for their needs; and a legend tells us that one time Gregory found thirteen at his table, and that day he had an angel as his guest.

As he walked along the streets of the city Gregory

could not put the picture of the poor slave boys out of his mind, and for days he thought of them continually. At last he went to the Pope of Rome, whose name was Pelagius, and begged that he might be allowed to go as a missionary to these distant and benighted English. After much persuasion, Pelagius finally gave his consent, and Gregory prepared to set out. Gregory had already started on his way, and was outside the city before the Romans heard of his departure. When the news had spread abroad, however, they were so troubled and grieved that they came in great excitement to the Pope and, declaring that Rome could not spare so wise and helpful a person as Gregory in these times of suffering and danger, they begged that Gregory might be called back to the city. Messengers were quickly sent after Gregory, and, obedient to the commands of the Pope, gave up his mission and returned to Rome. As it happened, not long after this Pelagius died, and then Gregory himself was made Pope, being the first Roman Pope of that name.

At the time when Gregory was chosen for this high honor, Rome was suffering greatly from sickness and famine, and all of Gregory's attention was taken up with the care of his people. As soon, however, as he could free himself somewhat from these burdens, Gregory's thoughts returned to his old plan of establishing a mission among the English. As he was now Pope, it was of course impossible for him to go in person, and the best he could do therefore was to send somebody in his place. The person he chose to be his



St. Augustine Preaching Before King Ethelbert.

missionary to the English was Augustine. A number of other monks were appointed to go with Augustine and to help him in his mission. It was in the early spring of 596 that this little band of teachers and preachers set out from Rome on their long journey. They traveled slowly overland, as was the custom in those days, and it was not until after Easter of the year 597 that they set foot on English soil. They landed on the island of Thanet, the very island where, a century and a half before, Hengest and Horsa had first touched British shores with the first ships bearing Englishmen to England.

Augustine had a very good reason for choosing the island of Thanet as his first landing place in England. For this island belonged to the kingdom of Kent, which at this time was ruled by King Ethelbert, and Augustine hoped that King Ethelbert would lend a willing ear to his message. The reason for his hope was the fact that King Ethelbert, although a heathen, was apparently only a lukewarm heathen, since he had married a Christian wife. Her name was Bertha, and she was the daughter of the King of Paris. When Ethelbert married Bertha he agreed that she should be free to practice her own religion, and he of course claimed the same right for himself. Queen Bertha had made no attempt to persuade the English to give up their heathen gods, but Augustine now counted on her help in getting a favorable hearing from King Ethelbert.

As soon as Augustine had landed on Thanet, he sent a messenger to the mainland, to the town of Can-

terbury, which was the capital of the kingdom of Kent, announcing to Ethelbert that strangers had come to his land, bearing an important and precious message from Rome. In answer to this the King sent back word that Augustine and his men should remain on the island of Thanet, and that they would be supplied with all they needed. Several days later Ethelbert and his counselors crossed over to Thanet from the mainland to hear the message that had been brought to them. Ethelbert knew that they had come to tell him about a God who was different from the English gods, and fearing they might try to use some magic arts on him, he demanded that the meeting should be held in the open air, where there could be no chance of deception. Augustine readily agreed to this, and when all had been arranged, he began and preached to Ethelbert, explaining to him all the whole story of the creation of the world by God and of its redemption by Christ, and expounding the many other details of the Christian religion as it was then taught by the Church of Rome. When he had finished, Ethelbert answered very discreetly and wisely. "Many fair things you have told us," said he, "and beautiful are the promises of this religion; but what you say is all strange and new to us, nor do we yet understand the proofs of its truth. We cannot therefore give up our old religion and our gods, which we have worshiped for so long, without further knowledge. But since you have come all this long way to tell us what you believe to be true, we will not receive you unkindly. You shall have a place to live in and all your

wants shall be supplied; and, furthermore, you shall be free to bring over to your religion any one that you can persuade to come by your teaching." Then Augustine and his followers were taken over to the mainland, and a place was assigned to them in Canterbury where they might live and teach any who wanted to hear them. So simple and so earnest were these missionaries in their teaching and preaching that soon many came to listen to their words. and after a time Ethelbert himself, having consulted with his counselors and having learned more fully what the new religion meant, decided to accept the teaching of Augustine. He was baptized on the first day of June, in the year in which the missionaries came to England, and with him a great number of his people accepted the new faith. Straightway with Ethelbert's help Augustine set to work to organize the church in England, and Augustine himself was made Archbishop of the English. That was the beginning of Christian teaching in England, and from that day to this there has always been an Archbishop of Canterbury at the head of the English Church.

II

Successful as Augustine's mission was, it was only the beginning of the conversion of the English. For Ethelbert was only king of Kent, and though he was one of the most powerful of the English kings, there were large regions of England over which he had no authority. All the northern part of England espe-

cially was governed by its own kings, and the kingdom of Deira, from which had come the slave boys that first suggested to Gregory the plan of sending a mission to the English, remained heathen for a long time after the arrival of Augustine and his monks. There was much fighting among the various kings of northern England, or Northumbria, as the region is called, and

SAXON WARRIORS

it happened that at one time a certain powerful king saw a chance of seizing possession of the kingdom of Deira. When Alle, the king of the Deirans, died, this hostile king entered the country with his forces and drove out Alle's young son Edwin and made himself king of Deira. Edwin was carried away by his friends and taken to the court of King Radwald, who then was ruler of another province of England known as East Anglia. Here Edwin lived until he grew up,

and then his troubles began again; for the king of Northumbria, who had usurped the throne of Edwin's father, sent word to King Radwald that he must take his choice of two things: he must either give up Edwin to him, in which case he should have a liberal reward of gold and treasure, or if he refused to do this, he must prepare to meet the Northumbrians in battle.

Now Radwald was very much troubled to know what to do. He had given his promise to Edwin to protect him, but he did not want to meet the powerful Northumbrians in battle, and the thought of the reward was a sore temptation. It was evening when the messengers of the Northumbrians came to Radwald, and for some time he debated with himself what he should do. Fortunately Edwin had a friend among the king's counselors, and when this friend saw that the king was tempted to break his faith with Edwin, he went out, and, finding Edwin, he begged him to prepare to fly in order to save his life. But Edwin refused. "King Radwald has always treated me kindly," said he, "and until I know that he intends to break his word with me, I shall believe that he will not. But if I must die, I would rather die at his hands than at those of any meaner man. Here I shall stay, for I am as safe here as at any other place to which I can go."

Unable to persuade Edwin to escape, his friend went away and Edwin sat down on a stone in front of the king's house. His mind was full of sorrow and doubt, for he did not know what would be the result of the king's deliberations. While he was sitting

there in the darkness, a tall figure suddenly appeared before him. "Why do you sit here," said this strange apparition, "while all the rest of the world is sleeping?" "What is it to you," answered Edwin, "whether I sit here or elsewhere?" "Do not be angry," said the stranger at this, "for I know what it is that is troubling you. But now tell me this: what will you do for the man who frees you from this trouble?" "All I have I will give him," said Edwin. "And what if he should promise you that you shall become a king and that you shall conquer your enemies and become one of the greatest of the kings of the English? What will you do then?" "My gratitude shall not be less than his service," was Edwin's reply. "But suppose he should ask you to follow his advice and to lead a better and a different kind of life from that which you have known hitherto and from that which all your forefathers have known? Will you obey him and follow him?" "Yes," answered Edwin, "I will obey him and follow him in everything." Then the strange figure placed its right hand on Edwin's head and said, "When this sign is given to you again, remember what we have spoken and remember to fulfill your promises." With these words the stranger disappeared as silently as he had come, and soon after Edwin's friend again came out of the house and told him joyfully that, cost what it might, the king had decided to remain Edwin's true friend and protector.

The king of the Northumbrians now made good his threat, and a short time after there was a great battle

on the banks of the river Idle between his forces and the East Anglians under the leadership of Radwald and Edwin. The Northumbrians were defeated, their king himself was slain, and so many others here lost their lives that the minstrels made a song of it, in which they said, "Idle was stained with the blood of Angles."

Edwin was now made king of all Northumbria, including his old kingdom of Deira, and he soon became one of the most powerful of the English kings. He still remained a heathen, however, and he soon forgot about the strange visitor who had come to him while he was sitting alone in the darkness in front of King Radwald's house. After some years Edwin wished to marry a lady named Ethelburg, who lived in Kent and who was the sister of King Ethelbert. Ethelburg was of course a Christian, and word was brought back to Edwin that she could not be married to a heathen. Then Edwin proposed that Ethelburg should become his wife on the condition that she should be free to follow her religion, just as Bertha, the wife of Ethelbert, had done before Ethelbert became a Christian. This plan was agreed upon, and when Ethelburg came to Northumbria to be married to Edwin, she brought with her a bishop as her chaplain. His name was Paulinus, and we shall presently see that what Augustine did for the south of England, in the end Paulinus did for the north.

Paulinus soon found that his progress must be very slow in the north. Edwin was a conscientious man and thoughtful, but he would do nothing rashly. At

one time, on an Easter eve, Edwin was receiving some ambassadors, when suddenly one of them struck at him with a poisoned dagger. One of the king's followers, a faithful thane named Lilla, saw the blow coming, and darting in front of the king, he received the dagger in his own body. He was killed, and the dagger passing through Lilla's body even slightly wounded the king. That same night a daughter was born to Edwin and Ethelburg, and Paulinus, pointing out to Edwin the occasion he had for gratitude because of the saving of his life that day and of the safe birth of his daughter, begged him now to accept Christianity. But Edwin was not yet ready to give up the worship of his father's gods, although he did agree to permit his daughter to be baptized, and he promised further that if he was successful in the war with the South Saxons, which he was about to undertake, he would do as Paulinus wished.

Edwin was completely successful in his war with the South Saxons, but still he put off the time when he should be baptized. He listened carefully to the teachings of Paulinus and he discussed the matter thoroughly with his own wise men. But he could not see his way clearly; he found it very difficult to tell just how much of his old heathen religion was wrong and how much of this new Christian religion was right. He pondered deeply over these matters and often sat by himself, lost in thought. One day as he sat thus reflecting, Paulinus suddenly appeared before him, and placing his right hand on his head, he asked solemnly whether or not Edwin remembered

that sign. Edwin was deeply moved at this, and when Paulinus reminded him again of the promise he had given to the stranger in the darkness, who apparently was none other than Paulinus himself, Edwin declared that he was ready to keep his word.

Soon after this Edwin assembled a meeting of all the important nobles and officers of his kingdom in order to present to them the question of accepting or rejecting the new teaching. When they were all gathered together, Edwin called upon Paulinus to explain again the teachings of his religion concerning the immortality of the soul, and concerning the Christian virtues of faith and charity and good works. When he had finished, various people arose and spoke. One of these was the chief priest of the heathen religion, a worldly-minded man named Coifi. He expressed himself as completely dissatisfied with their old religion. "I am convinced," he said, "that the religion we have followed hitherto is vain and useless, for no one certainly has been more zealous in serving our gods than I have been, and yet there are many who are more prosperous than I am. Now I know that if our gods had any true understanding, they would have rewarded me rather than those who have not served them so well. My advice is, therefore, if this new religion promises to be more profitable than our old one, that we accept it." Others in the assembly agreed with Coifi, that it would be foolish for them to retain their old religion if there was a more powerful one to be had. Then another man arose and spoke, and he was one who saw more deeply into the true mean-

ing of religion. He spoke of the uncertainty of this life, of how little we know of what goes before and what comes after it, and how great need there is for further knowledge. "This life, O King," said he, "seems to me like this—as though a sparrow should fly in the window while you are feasting on a winter's night. Within doors it is warm and bright, and the fire is blazing in the hall. Without it is dark and cold and raining. The sparrow comes in one window and flies out of the other. Only for a moment does it know the joy and cheer of the hall, just as our life is but as the twinkling of an eye compared with eternity. But out of the darkness and storm the sparrow comes, and into the darkness and storm it passes, and whence it comes and whither it goes no man knows. If then this new teaching can tell us anything of these matters, if it can tell us what we should think of this life of ours, of what goes before and what comes after, let us by all means listen to it."

Thus one spoke after another, until it seemed quite clear that most of them were ready to give up the worship of their heathen gods in favor of the teachings of Paulinus. "Who shall be first," asked the king then, "to overthrow our heathen altars and shrines, and to destroy the sacred inclosures in which our altars are kept?" "Who more fittingly than I?" answered Coifi. "Let me be the first to overthrow the shrines at which, in my ignorance, I have so zealously worshiped." Then Coifi mounted the king's war-horse, and took a spear in his hand and rode toward the place where the altars were stationed. The peo-

ple watched him in astonishment and thought he had lost his mind, for it was not permitted to priests of their religion to bear arms or to ride on anything except a mare. But Coifi rode swiftly forward, and when he came to the sacred place, he cast his spear at the shrine and afterward set fire to it and thus destroyed all the signs of their old worship.

Thus Northumbria was converted through the teachings of Paulinus, as Kent had been through the teachings of Augustine. Edwin straightway set to work to build a church for Paulinus, and this church was built in York, the capital of Deira. Here Edwin and many of his people were baptized, and though it was a very humble structure when compared with the great Minster which now stands in York, this little church that Edwin built is important as marking the beginnings in the north of the work of civilization which was begun at Canterbury in the south. York and Canterbury have always been the two centers of the life of the English Church, and thus it happens that there are two archbishops in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York.

III

The course of events, whether in church or in state, never ran smooth for very long in the life of oldest England, and Edwin and Paulinus soon experienced a change of fortune in Northumbria. For a king of another region of England, who was still a heathen,

but who had gained great power, made an attack upon the Northumbrians. In a fiercely fought battle the Northumbrians were defeated and Edwin himself was slain. When the news was brought to York, Paulinus and Edwin's queen, together with a few others, hastily fled and managed to escape to Kent, where they were safe. Thus then for a time the work of teaching and of preaching was interrupted in Northumbria, although not for long. For after a few years a nephew of Edwin's named Oswald set to work to regain the kingdom which his uncle had lost. He gathered together a great army at a place which to this day is still called St. Oswald's, in the north of England, and here he fought a successful battle against the heathen conqueror of his country.

Oswald thus gained control of the kingdom of Northumbria, and it was not long before learning and civilization began to flourish again. But now Oswald did not turn to Kent or to Rome for teachers. He sought for help nearer home. In his day there were many learned and good men in Ireland, where several great schools for the training of teachers and preachers had grown up. Now when Oswald was a young boy he had been compelled to save his life by flight, and just as Edwin had found a refuge at the court of King Radwald in East Anglia, Oswald had fled for safety to the Irish school and monastery of Iona, founded by Saint Columba and situated on an island between England and Ireland. This was one of the most famous places of learning in all Europe, and from Iona preachers and teachers went out to the most

distant and the most dangerous countries to carry on the good work of converting and civilizing the heathen barbarians. Here Oswald spent some years, and while he was living and studying with them, he learned to have the highest respect for his Irish teachers.

Now, when Oswald had become king of Northumbria, his thoughts naturally turned to his old friends at Iona. He sent over to them and asked them to appoint a bishop of the Northumbrians who might continue the work that Paulinus had begun. The monks of Iona considered the matter carefully, and finally chose one of their number for the honorable but somewhat difficult position. The man whom they chose went over to Northumbria, but he stayed only a short time, explaining to the monks when he got back that he could do no good to a people as wild as the Northumbrians were. The monks were greatly disappointed at the weakness of the man they had chosen, and they debated back and forth for a long time as to what should now be done. At length a certain one of the monks arose, and speaking to the returned bishop, he said: "It seems to me, my brother, that you have treated these ignorant men of Northumbria too severely. Would it not be better to do as the apostle tells us, to make our teaching easy at first, and thus pass on little by little to the deeper things?" And so he continued, describing the way he thought the Northumbrians should be taught. When he had finished, all the monks declared that this man was the very person to undertake the mission to the Northumbrians, and he was accordingly made a

bishop and was straightway sent over to King Oswald. Now, the name of this Irish monk was Aidan, and that is a name which well deserves to be remembered, together with the names of Augustine and of Paulinus. For, although Paulinus was the first to carry the message to those Deirans that Pope Gregory was so anxious to reach, it was Aidan who continued and completed the work which seemed to be altogether destroyed at the death of Edwin.

Aidan did not find the Northumbrians wild and unmanageable, but on the contrary, ready and even eager to listen to his teachings. So simple and so kindly were the words he had to say to them, that everywhere he went they flocked around to hear him. At first Aidan had to speak in Irish, for he knew no English, and Oswald then translated what he said. But Aidan soon learned English, and then he traveled about, always on foot, through all Northumbria, preaching everywhere. Aidan did not live usually at York, but with fond memories of his old island home at Iona, he established a monastery and school on a small island just off the coast of Northumbria. This island was called Lindisfarne, and from the school that grew up here many a teacher went out to teach not only in England but in other countries as well. In every way possible Oswald helped Aidan in his work, and it would be hard to say which of the two was the more earnest in doing good. The story is told that one Easter Sunday Aidan was sitting at dinner with Oswald when a large silver dish was set on the table, filled with meat for their dinner. Aidan

blessed the food, and they were about to begin to eat when the king's officer who had charge of his alms came into the room and said that a number of poor people from the country about were standing in the street, asking for alms from the king. Immediately Oswald commanded the food to be taken from the table and given to the poor, and then that the silver dish itself should be broken into pieces and portioned out among them. Aidan was so pleased at this charitable action of the king's that he took Oswald's hand in his and cried out: "May this blessed hand never pass into decay!" And many people believed for centuries afterward that Oswald's hand remained as sound and whole as when he was alive.

Like so many other kings of the English in these early times, Oswald died a violent death, for he was killed in battle by a heathen king named Penda. Parts of his body were carried away by his friends and were buried by Aidan at Lindisfarne. So great was the love the English had for Oswald that he was reverenced as a saint after his death. A few years later Aidan also died, and on the night of his death, an English shepherd boy, watching his sheep on the hills of Northumberland, saw a vision of angels bearing a soul to heaven. Several days later he learned that the hour of his vision was just the hour at which Aidan died. The name of this shepherd boy was Cuthbert, and when he was a few years older, it was he who took up Aidan's work and carried it forward. And thus, passing on from one man's hand to another's, the work of teaching was

cared for without interruption in Northumbria. Monasteries were built here and there, and in these monasteries learning and religion and all the arts of peace flourished. After a few generations no one would have thought of calling the Northumbrians wild and barbarous, for the church had taught them not only a new religion but a new and a better way of carrying on the affairs of all their familiar every-day life.

Thus it was that the English, first in Kent, under the teaching of Augustine, and then in Northumbria under Paulinus and Aidan, learned to know that there are things in this life more worth while than fighting merely for the sake of fighting or for the sake of conquest. They began to learn the lesson, which the world is still learning, that one of the best and highest things for men to do is to live lives of peace and good will, and of good works toward each other.

IV

THE FIRST POET

On the northern coast of England, not far from the island of Lindisfarne, where Aidan settled when he came to Northumbria, there is a little harbor and town named Whitby. How long this town has been there nobody knows, for as far back as English history runs, the records tell of the existence of a town at this place. It is by nature a most convenient place for building a town. The high cliffs and headlands, which generally come down to the water's edge along this part of the coast of England, are here broken by an opening through which a little river makes its way down a narrow valley to the sea. The early English sailors found it convenient to row their boats into the little bay at the mouth of this stream, where they could draw them up on the beach, out of the way of the surf and the rough water of the open ocean. And to this day, if you go to Whitby you can see at low tide the great hulls of coasting vessels resting on the soft mud of the bottom of the stream, like stranded whales, waiting for the high tide to come and set them afloat again. And if you climb

the stony road to the top of the cliff on the southern side of the harbor, up past the little stone houses all with red tile roofs, you will come to the place where the first English poet that we know anything about lived, and where he wrote his poems. From this cliff you can look down upon the town, a busy, bustling fishing town to-day as it doubtless was fifteen hundred years ago; and you can look out upon the expanse of the North Sea, whose waves are continually breaking at the foot of the cliff, just as they did when the first English poet stood there to behold them. But if you seek for the home in which this poet dwelt, you will find nothing, for nothing now remains there to mark the place, except the ruined walls of a monastery built on the site many years after the poet's death.

This town of Whitby was not always called by that name. When the Danes settled in England in the time of King Alfred and after, they took possession of many English towns, and often gave these towns new names. Whitby is a Danish name, and means simply White-town. But the first English poet lived at Whitby long before the time of the Danes, and then the town was known by an English name, which, however, does not look very much like English as we write it to-day. The first name of Whitby was Streones-halh, which means something like River-mouth Bay. Since the Danish name is so much easier than the English, however, and since the Danish name is the one by which the town is known to-day, it seems best simply to call the town Whitby, even when we

are speaking of it at a time before the Danes had come to England.

The work of building schools and monasteries in Northumbria, which Aidan began at Lindisfarne, proceeded very rapidly, and just a few years after Aidan's death, an important one was established at Whitby. It was built by a woman whose name was Hild, and who herself became the abbess of the monastery after it was finished. In this monastery ruled over by the Abbess Hild, there were not only monks and nuns, but also a number of servants and helpers who had not devoted themselves to the religious life. Among these was a poor herdsman whose name was Cadmon. He could neither read nor write, and his work in the monastery consisted in taking care of the cows and other cattle which were needed to supply the monastery table with milk and butter.

Now it was a common custom for Cadmon and his other friends to entertain themselves, when the day's work was done, by sitting around the fire telling stories and singing songs. Among other amusements they had one especially which is known as "passing the harp." According to this custom, the harp was passed along from one person to another, and as it came each man's turn, he took the harp and sang a song to its accompaniment. Most people in those days knew many stories which they could recite in this way, but unfortunately for Cadmon, this was an accomplishment which he could never learn. Consequently when he saw the harp approaching him, he would get up and leave the circle, ashamed to

confess that he could not sing a song as the others had done.

It happened that one night Cadmon left the group of his friends in this way, as he had often done before, and went into the stable where he was to pass the night watching the cattle. After a time he fell asleep. As he lay sleeping, he heard a voice calling to him, which said: "Cadmon, sing for me." Then Cadmon answered the voice, saying: "I cannot sing; and it is for that reason that I have left the company of my friends and have come hither." "Nevertheless, I say you must sing for me," the voice continued. "What shall I sing?" asked Cadmon. "Sing for me," the voice answered, "the story of how all things were created." And then Cadmon, greatly to his own astonishment, found that he was able to sing, and he began to sing the praises of God the Creator in verses which he had never heard before.

The next morning, when Cadmon awoke from the sleep in which he had had this dream or vision, the strangest part of it was that he remembered perfectly what he had sung in his sleep during the night, and, better still, he was able to add other verses to these. He told what had happened to him to his master, and his master went directly to Abbess Hild and repeated the story to her. Hild immediately called Cadmon to her, and, sending for several learned monks, she bade them recite a passage of Scripture in English to Cadmon, and then she asked Cadmon to turn what he had heard into verse. The next morning Cadmon came back to Hild and recited to her in perfect and melo-

dious verse all that he had been told by the learned monks. Then Hild immediately perceived that this poor cowherd in her monastery was possessed of a very precious gift. She gave orders that he should be accepted as a monk into her monastery, and that the other monks should teach him all the story of the Bible. This was so done, and being unable to read, Cadmon learned all the stories of the Bible by having them told to him, and then he turned them into poetical form. The monks were glad to write down the poems as Cadmon recited them, and thus together they put into verse the whole story of the creation of the world, of the fall of man, of the children of Israel and the Exodus out of Egypt into the Promised Land, and many other stories contained in the Bible.

For many years Cadmon continued to live in the monastery at Whitby, making noble use of this poet's gift that had been granted to him. And it was here at Whitby that he finally died. He had been unwell for several weeks before his death, but it was not supposed that his sickness was serious. One night, however, the night on which he died, he asked his nurse to take him to the infirmary, which was the part of the monastery where those brothers who were dangerously sick and on the point of death were usually cared for together. The man was surprised that Cadmon should want to be taken to the infirmary, but he did as he was asked to do. Cadmon seemed to be bright and happy, and talked cheerfully with the other sick people in the infirmary. When it was about

midnight, he asked if the Eucharist was there in the infirmary. "Why do you ask that?" his friends said. "You are not so near to death that you need ask for the Eucharist." But Cadmon asked for the Eucharist again, and when he had it in his hand he inquired whether they were all kindly disposed and at peace with him. When they said they were, then Cadmon continued: "And I, too, am at peace with all men." Having made his last communion, he asked if the time was near when the brothers of the monastery should arise and say the prayers known as nocturns. "It is almost time," they answered. "Let us then wait for it," he said; and blessing himself with the sign of the cross, he lay back upon his pillow, and so falling asleep, as peacefully and as gently as he had lived, he passed to his final rest.

This is the simple story of the blameless life of the first English poet whose name has come down to us. Other poets there must have been before Cadmon, poets who sang the stories of the bloody combats of English heroes before the days of Augustine and Aidan. From the very earliest times the English have had their bards or minstrels, whose task it was to keep alive the fame of the nation's great men. But not even the names of any of these earlier heathen poets are known to us, and but a few fragments of their songs have survived to our day. These songs were of the kind which Cadmon could not sing, but which his companions, at their feasts and banquets, all sang so freely to the accompaniment of the harp. This heathen minstrelsy is now all lost and silent.

while down through the ages the clear voice of Cadmon is heard, singing the old story of the Creation of the World and of the ways of God to man. From Cadmon to Milton it is a thousand years, but the poor cowherd who became the chief ornament of Hild's ancient monastery on the cliff above Whitby sang his songs in the same spirit as the author of "Paradise Lost."

V

THE VENERABLE BEDE

The name which his parents gave to this man was simply Bede, but so great was the respect which after ages had for him that the word venerable was often added to his name, and so he came to be called The Venerable Bede. There is a legend which started a short time after Bede's death telling how he was first called venerable. According to this story, when Bede was an old man and his eyesight had grown dim, a trick was played on him by some thoughtless and impertinent young men of his monastery. Bede was always very earnest in teaching, and he was careful never to disappoint people who looked to him for counsel and instruction. Now these heedless youths came to Bede one day and said to him that the church was full of people come there to hear what he had to say on a certain subject. Eager as always to teach wisdom where it was sought for, Bede mounted into the pulpit and preached earnestly for a long time. His eyes were too dim for him to see that the church

was not full of attentive listeners as he had been led to suppose, but that, except for the few idle scoffers, he was preaching to empty benches. As he finished speaking, however, voices were heard from all sides in the air, saying, "Amen, very Venerable Bede." And thus we see from this story that not only did the men of his day respect Bede highly, but they thought that even the angels listened gladly to his words of wisdom.

The monastery in which Bede lived and labored was situated on the northeastern coast of England, between Whitby and Lindisfarne. It was therefore quite near to these two important places, and it was also near to another important place, the town of York, where the bishop of the Northumbrians had his cathedral church. Bede's monastery was built by a man named Benedict, and like Whitby, it was built at the mouth of a river. The name of this river being Wear, Benedict's monastery came to be called Wearmouth. After the monastery at Wearmouth was finished, Benedict built another about seven miles from Wearmouth, and this was called Jarrow. But though they were some distance apart, these two monasteries were practically regarded as one. They had one abbot to rule over them, and the monks passed back and forth from one house to the other. The place is therefore sometimes called a double monastery, and it is thus given a double name, the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow.

When Benedict built his monastery at Wearmouth it was one of the wonders of the time. Most of the

buildings in Benedict's day were still of the rude and simple kind that the English had learned to build from their half-savage ancestors. When Cadmon was a monk at Whitby, he and his fellow-monks lived in old-fashioned, wooden and straw-thatched houses, which differed very little from those in which an atheling and his companions lived. But Benedict was a man who had traveled and seen something of the world. He was not satisfied, therefore, with such simple surroundings as the founders of the earlier monasteries had contented themselves with. He had been in Rome, and now, when he came to build his monastery, he used stone instead of wood for the structure. He even had windows with glass in them, a thing almost unheard of in England at that time. Moreover he brought over pictures from the Continent to adorn his church, and rich garments for the priests to wear while they were performing the services, and costly and beautiful vessels, crosses and other furnishings for the altar. All this was very different from what the Northumbrians had been used to in earlier days. Aidan's churches were all simple and rough, but now Benedict strove to show that the new teaching could be made beautiful as well as useful and true. Best of all, Benedict was greatly interested in books, and wherever he went in his travels, he industriously gathered together as many books as he could find and brought them back to his monastery. Thus in the course of time there was collected at Wearmouth a library of perhaps several hundred volumes, which in those times was a library of considerable size. And

it was the presence of this library at Wearmouth which enabled Bede to become, as he did when he grew up, one of the greatest scholars and the best writers in all Europe in his day.

After it was founded, Benedict's monastery continued to flourish for some years, until at length a terrible pestilence began to rage in the land. The monks died off one after the other, and it seemed as though nothing could stop the ravages of this plague. At last all the monks at Wearmouth had died except one, and in the whole monastery there was besides this monk only one little boy to help in the performance of the divine service. Faithful to his duty to the end, this monk regularly went through the appointed services of the church, though no one was there to listen or to sing the responses except this one little boy, who bravely held up his part of the services. Now, this little boy was Bede. He had entered the monastery when he was only seven years old as a student and choirboy, and in this monastery he remained to the very end of his life. When he was nineteen years old he was made a deacon, and when he was thirty years old he was made a priest. These were the only important events of his life, and as you see, they were not very exciting. Bede's whole existence was spent in the peace and quiet of Benedict's monastery, and his days were passed in calm study, in writing, in teaching and in meditation. The confusion of warfare, the struggle for high places of wealth and power by the ambitious, all the hates and fears, the pushings and strivings of life in the world, were unknown to Bede.

His mind was always placid and serene, and his life was always that of the gentle scholar who seeks only to know the truth for himself and to teach other people to know it.

Though all of Bede's life was spent in the quiet and seclusion of the monastery at Wearmouth, it must not be supposed that his was an idle life. On the contrary it was a very busy one, as were the lives of the other monks in the monastery. After the plague which carried off so many of the brothers at Wearmouth had passed away, gradually the places of the old monks were taken by new ones until the monastery was again full. In the two houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow there were altogether six hundred members. And all these monks were constantly busy doing something. Their monastery was a perfect hive of bees, every one industriously adding his own little part to the general store. Or perhaps it would be better to call it a great college, for the monasteries in oldest England filled the place which colleges and other schools occupy nowadays. But the ancient monasteries differed from the modern college in this respect, that the members of the monasteries did a much greater variety of things than the members of a modern college do. Since the monastery had to provide its own food, shelter and clothing, some of the monks must plow the fields and sow and reap the grain. Others took care of the cattle and the sheep, while still others turned the milk and cream which the cows produced into cheese and butter, and the wool that was shorn from the backs of the sheep into yarn

for weaving. All the building of the monastery was done by the brothers themselves, and so there was need for masons and carpenters and all kinds of workmen. If any tools or utensils were needed, cups or plates or pans, they had to be made in the monastery, and workmen were therefore trained for the mechanic's trade. In the house itself there were cooking and cleaning and baking to be done, in fact, all the thousand and one cares of a household to be attended to. Indeed, the monks in these early monasteries called themselves a family, although the family was usually a rather large one and the members of it were occupied in so many different ways that it seemed more like a little world than a family. With all these special tasks of the various members of the monastery, there were certain duties which all the brothers performed alike, from youngest to oldest, from lowest to highest, and these were the duties of attending and taking part in the religious services of the monastery. These services consisted not merely of a few minutes for prayers every morning, but throughout the day and night, at certain hours there were appointed services which the brothers were pledged to observe. These services took up a good deal of their time, but no matter how busy they were, the services were not neglected; for the monks were of the opinion that a man should never become so occupied with his own affairs that he neglected the affairs of God. Bede was a very busy and industrious man, but he would never excuse himself on this account from the regular services of the monastery. However important

he considered his other work, he thought that there was nothing more important than the daily and hourly services of the church. "I know," he said, "that angels come to the meetings of the brethren. But what if they did not find me among them when they came? Would they not say, 'Where is Bede? Why does he not come with the brethren to the appointed prayers?' "

Now, Bede also had his special work in this busy monastery at Wearmouth, but he neither worked in the fields, nor made pots and pans, nor was he a weaver or a carpenter or a mason. His occupation was one which at first sight may seem much less valuable than these useful and practical trades. His work was that of a student and writer of books. "I have always," he said, "found my pleasure in learning, teaching and writing." And to-day, though we know practically nothing about the buildings of the carpenter and the mason who labored at Wearmouth, since they have long ago crumbled away, the name of Bede and the books which he wrote are still as fresh and important as they ever were. The carpenter and the mason were undoubtedly necessary before there could be a place for the scholar, but the monks of Bede's day were wise enough to see that mere buildings of brick and stones were not the only things to be sought for, and that there must be a place also for the scholar, who works not with his hands but with his mind, in their little world. Indeed, if it were not for Bede we should know practically nothing about Wearmouth or about England in the period in which

he lived, for it is mainly from his writings that we learn about the events of his day.

Bede studied and taught and wrote about a great many different things. His most interesting, and, to us to-day, his most important book is his HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE. This book tells the whole story of the coming of the English to England under Hengest and Horsa, of the work of Augustine, of Paulinus and of Aidan, and of all the other important happenings in England down to the year 731. It was finished in that year, which was just four years before Bede's death. He also wrote another book, telling the lives of all the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow from the time of Benedict down to his own day. Besides being a learned historian, Bede was likewise skilled in arithmetic, and he wrote some mathematical works which were known and used all over Europe. He wrote other books for his pupils to aid them in learning grammar, rhetoric and the writing of Latin verses. Finally he wrote many sermons and commentaries on the Scriptures. All of these works were written in Latin, for Latin was the language which scholars always used in Bede's day for their more serious writings. Bede was an Englishman, and he did write some things in English, but Latin was a language which every educated man knew, whether he was Italian, German, French or English, and therefore it was much more sensible to write in Latin than in English, which practically no one outside of England could understand in those days. Bede's writings were known and circulated,

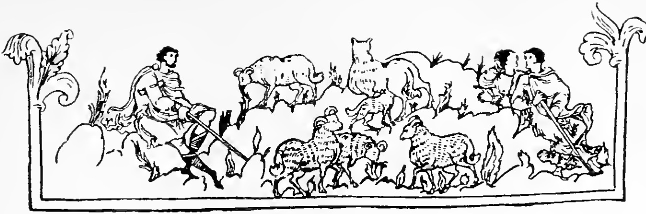
therefore, not only in England, but everywhere on the Continent as well. His writings were copied and re-copied, and to this day manuscripts of his works are more frequently found in the old libraries of Europe than of any other author of his time. But besides all the work of collecting the facts that he wished to write about and then of putting them together into books of his own, Bede had another occupation that occupied a great deal of his time. He was a teacher, and many students came to Wearmouth from all parts of England to be trained under his direction. Bede not only loved to learn things for himself, but also to help others to learn. Where the teacher is willing and the students are eager, the work is sure to be well and pleasantly done, and Bede's students always spoke of him as their "beloved master," and he called them his "dearest sons."

One of the monks in the monastery at Wearmouth was named Cuthbert, and he wrote a letter in which he told the story of Bede's last sickness and death. In the spring of the year 735, when Bede was sixty-two years old, his strength began to fail. In spite of his growing weakness, however, he would not give up any of his usual daily tasks. He still taught his pupils and attended to all the duties of the monastic life. Bede knew many English poems, probably those of Cadmon among others, and often he would encourage his friends by singing some of these verses. The work which he was engaged in writing at the time of his last sickness was a translation of the Gospel of St. John from Latin into English. In Bede's day

there were no English translations of the Bible, and Bede was the first Englishman who undertook to put the Bible into the language which all Englishmen can read. He was very anxious to complete this translation, and as he lay on his sick bed, he had the brothers write down the words at his dictation. Early on the morning of the day of his death, they began to write as Bede directed them, and they wrote steadily until nine o'clock, when they were called away to attend services in the chapel. Bede was then left alone with only a little boy, named Wilbert, to act as his scribe. "There is only one chapter left," said Wilbert, "but you suffer too much to go on and finish it now." "No," answered Bede; "I do not suffer. Take your pen and mend it, and write quickly." So the hours passed quietly by, with the boy Wilbert writing by his side, and Bede as cheerful as ever and as happy in his work. As the writing continued Wilbert said at last, "Dear master, now there is only one sentence not yet written down." "Very well," answered Bede, "now write it." After a moment Wilbert said, "Now it is finished," and Bede replied, "You have spoken truly; it is finished." And then, chanting a prayer to himself, Bede lay back on his couch and quietly breathed his last. He had lived the happiest life that any man can live, a life of peace and gentleness, every day filled with pleasant and useful occupation to the very last moment of his serene and saintly old age.

Such was the life and such were the works of one of the earliest of Englishmen to follow the calling of student and scholar. Since Bede's day there have been

many Englishmen who have found their pleasure in learning and teaching and writing, and many who have accomplished great good by their writing. In all the long list, however, there is none who has lived a more unselfish or blameless life than Bede lived. He lived not for himself, but for others, and when we recall that the year of Bede's death was just one hundred years after the year of Aidan's arrival among the rough and quarrelsome Northumbrians, we can see that a great change had been wrought in the English in this comparatively short time. We do not know who Bede's grandfather was, but we can be pretty sure that he was a heathen, that he never had a pen in his hand, and that he would have found it hard to understand what charity and love for his fellow men meant, if any one had tried to explain these ideas to him. But in Bede's day the Northumbrians were no longer interested merely in bloodshed and warfare. They had learned many new things, not only how to make their surroundings more pleasant and comfortable, but also how to make their minds richer and their hearts gentler and more kindly. They had passed out of barbarism into civilization.



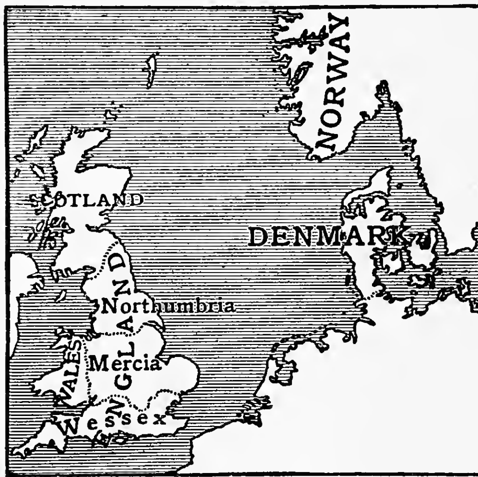
VI

THE VIKINGS IN ENGLAND

In Jutland and on the island of Zealand and the many other islands belonging to the kingdom of Denmark, and then across the narrow straits and the Baltic Sea in Norway and in Sweden, there dwelt in the eighth century a race of bold and adventurous seamen. Though they belonged to several different kingdoms, they were all closely related in blood. They were, in fact, near akin to the tribes of Angles and Jutes and Saxons who had left the Continent several centuries before to found a new nation in Britain. But while the English in England were gradually becoming Christianized and civilized, their Teutonic cousins in Denmark and Norway remained as wild and as barbarous heathens as ever. They had their halls and their towns, just like those of the English, but no teachers had ever come to them to lead them to a different life from that which they had always known. They knew nothing about Rome and the Roman church, and they knew nothing about England, for after the English left their old homes, they soon gave up all communication with the kinsmen whom

they left behind. And after the coming of Augustine to England, the minds of the English were turned to the south, toward France and Rome, rather than to the north, toward Denmark and Norway.

These vikings of Denmark and Norway, however, were soon to have their day. For some reason or other the fever of adventure got into their blood, and they grew dissatisfied with the life they had been living along the creeks and bays of the North Sea and the Baltic. They had always been used to the water, and nothing was easier for them to do than to build ships and sail away to any country they wanted to reach. Now the nearest country and the one which promised the richest plunder was England, and to England the piratical vikings first turned their attention.



The Old Homes of the Northmen

In the meantime, England was all unconscious of the trouble that was brewing. The English had lived

so long in peace that they had forgotten the possibility of any danger from abroad. But they were soon to have a rude awakening. One day in the year 793, ships full of armed men appeared off the northeastern coast of England. Knowing perfectly well where the richest treasure was to be found, the captains of these ships steered their course to Lindisfarne Island, where Aidan had built his monastery. There they landed their troops and the work of destruction and pillage began. They burned the buildings and killed or carried off the monks into slavery. All the contents of the monastery that were valuable or that struck them as useful they bore away to their ships. When they sailed away with their booty, they left behind them nothing but a heap of smoking ruins to mark the place where once a busy throng of monks had labored and led their lives in peace and innocence. The next year another band of vikings attacked Bede's old monastery at Jarrow, and they plundered it as Lindisfarne had been plundered just a year before. This time, however, they did not escape so easily, for some English warriors managed to capture their leader and to slay him, and the ships in which the vikings had come being soon afterward wrecked, the English put to death all the pirates they could lay their hands on.

This was the beginning of the great struggle between the English and the vikings, which was to last for two hundred years, and which was to end only with the seating of a Danish king on the English throne. This Danish conquest of England, however, was to take place slowly, and the Danes themselves

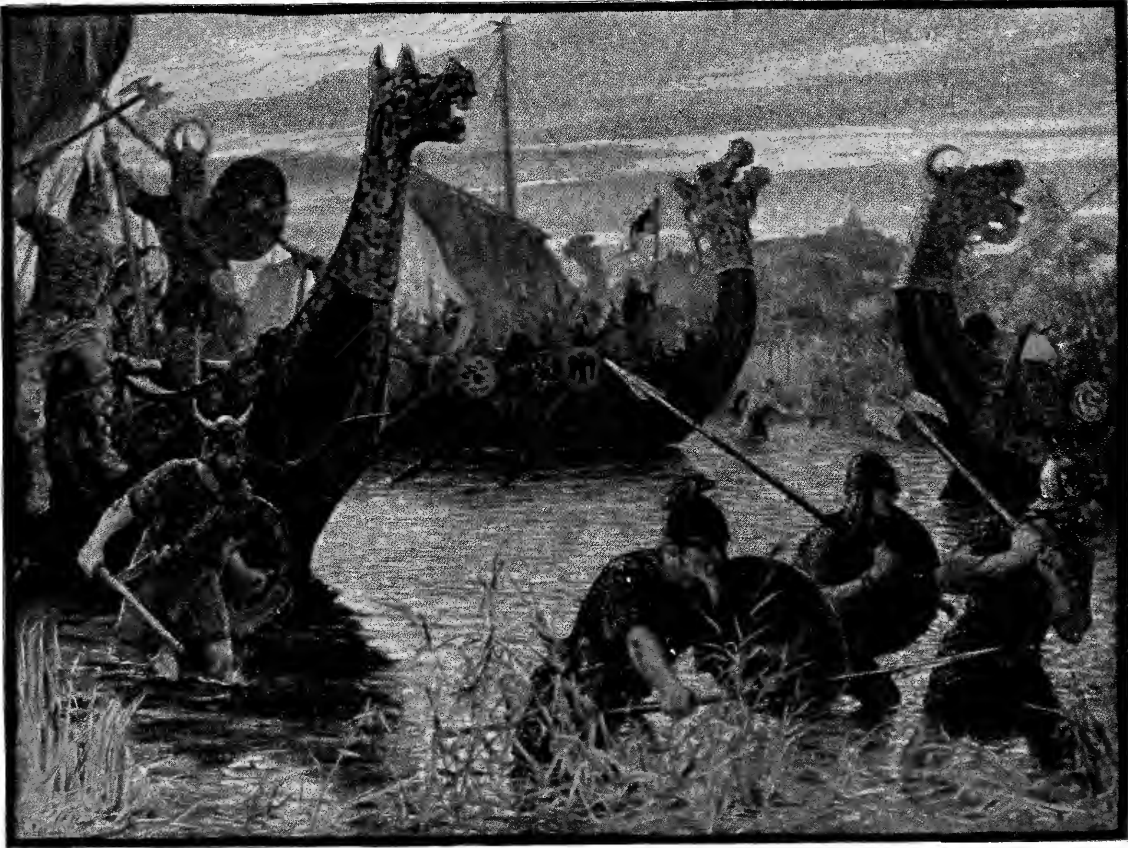
were to change greatly in the course of it. In these first years of their attacks upon England they worked in a very haphazard way. They had no settled plan or no single leader; but whenever a Danish earl decided that he wanted to go adventuring, he got his carpenters together and he built himself a long ship. Then he summoned his thanes, as many as he wanted to take with him, and they were ready to face the world. It was customary to give the title of king to an earl in command of a fleet, even though he had no land, for it was supposed that when he got tired of voyaging about in search of plunder and wanted to settle down in his kingdom, the commander of such a fleet would know how to help himself to all the lands he needed. The largest ships were called dragons, because they were ornamented at the prow with the carved head of a dragon and at the stern with a dragon's tail, so that the whole ship was supposed to be a floating dragon. As the vikings became rich from their plunder, they spent a great deal of care and money on the ornamentation of their ships. The dragon's head was often plated with gold and the ship itself was painted with bright colors. The warriors were all well armed, and with the prospect of plunder always before them and no qualms of conscience to disturb their peace of mind, they fought boldly and merrily wherever they saw anything to be gained. But they were too worldly-wise to fight merely for glory. Ever ready to risk their lives and to follow their earl wherever he led them, they never lost sight of the fact that to have ships and swords and shields and

spears, and gold rings to wear on their arms and gold buckles and pins and chains to adorn themselves with, they must first provide their earl with the means for giving such gifts. They were sea rovers and gentleman adventurers, and the profit of one was the profit of the other, and their profit together was always the loss of the enemy.

Many of the old sagas of the vikings tell how they prepared their ships and set out in search of adventure. One time King Ragnar, says his saga, was sitting at home thinking about his sons, who had become famous warriors; and, since he was unwilling that the sons should surpass the father, he pondered what he could do to equal their great deeds. At length he called together his workmen and had trees felled in the forest and set the carpenters to work to build two ships larger than had ever before been built in that land. Then he made preparations of all kinds, and people soon saw that Ragnar intended to go on an expedition. But nobody knew where he was going, and all the neighboring kings began to strengthen their defenses for fear he intended to attack them. When his preparations were all made, Randalin, Ragnar's wife, asked him where he was going; and Ragnar said he was going to England with only these two ships and as many men as he could get into them. "This plan," said Randalin, "seems to me very rash. It would be much better for you to have more ships and smaller ones than to go only with your two great ships." "I should deserve little credit," answered Ragnar, "if I won lands with many ships. But there

is no record of any one who has won such a land as England with only two ships, and two ships only will I take with me." In spite of all that Randalin could say, Ragnar would have his way, and he set out for England with only two ships. It would have been better for him if he had listened to his wife's advice, for on his voyage to England he met with stormy weather, and both his ships were wrecked on the coast of England. Ragnar and all his men reached the shore alive, with all their armor, but they were attacked by the English and every one of them was slain. Ragnar himself was taken alive, and, according to the saga, was put into a snake-pit, where he was stung to death by the snakes in the pit. When the news of Ragnar's death was brought back to his sons, they all vowed vengeance on the English, and in the end they made the English pay dearly for the death of their father.

At another time another famous viking, named Olaf, was out on a raid, and being in need of food, he went ashore on the coast of Ireland with his men and drove down a number of cattle to the beach. A farmer came to Olaf and begged him to give back his cows. Olaf told the farmer that they were in a hurry, but that he might have his cows if he could recognize them and get them out of the herd without delaying their departure. Now Olaf supposed this would be impossible, for the herd was a very large one. But the farmer had with him a fine sheep-dog, and when he had spoken to the dog and pointed out the herd to him, the dog went into the herd, and picking out one



A Danish Raid.

cow here and another there, he soon had as many separated from the rest of the herd as the farmer had said he owned. When they saw that all of these cows were marked with the same mark, then Olaf and his men acknowledged that the dog had picked out the right cattle, and they all thought he was a remarkably knowing dog. Olaf asked the farmer if he would give him the dog, and the farmer gladly did so. In return Olaf gave the farmer a gold ring, and promised always to be his friend. This dog's name was Vigi, and the saga says that he was the best of all dogs and that Olaf owned him for a long time afterward.

The vikings were very proud of their ships and King Olaf owned a dragon that was famous in its day and for many years after. He called it the Long Serpent, and he had another smaller ship which he called the Short Serpent. The Long Serpent was nearly one hundred and fifty feet long, and the dragon's head at the prow and the tail at the stern were ornamented with gold. Olaf was very careful in the building of this ship, and only the best materials were used. Thorberg was the name of the shipbuilder who laid the keel and made the stem and stern. While the bulwarks were being put on, Thorberg had to go home for some time to his farm, and when he got back the bulwarks were all on. That same evening King Olaf and Thorberg went to look at the ship, and everybody said they had never seen a larger or a finer long-ship than this was. The next morning early Olaf and Thorberg again went down to look at the ship, but

when they got there they found the workmen all standing about and doing nothing. The king asked the reason, and they said that the ship was spoiled, that some one had gone along one side from stem to stern and had made deep cuts in the gunwale. When the king saw this he was very angry, and he swore that the man who had done this should be put to death, and the one who could find out who had done it should receive a large reward. "I can tell you, king," said Thorberg, "who did this." "You are the most likely man to know," answered the king; "who did it?" "I can tell you who did it," said Thorberg; "I did it myself." "Then you shall make it as good as it was before, or you shall lose your life," replied the king to this. Then Thorberg set to work and shaped the gunwale down as far as the cuts reached, and when he had finished, everybody said that the ship was shaped much better on that side than it had been before. The king then asked Thorberg to shape the gunwale on the other side in the same way, and Olaf was so well pleased with Thorberg's work that after that he made Thorberg the master for the building of the whole ship until it was finished.

It was thus as pirates and sea-rovers that the vikings for some years continued to make their visits to England. Although they might cause great loss and suffering wherever they happened to strike, yet so long as they came merely as pirates and made their attacks here and there scatteringly, at some rich monastery or other place promising plunder, the country as a whole did not suffer greatly from their invasions. But after

a time the vikings were not satisfied with making piratical raids. Just as the first Englishmen had done when they came over at the invitation of Vortigern, the vikings soon made up their minds that they wanted to settle down in England. Wherever an earl found a place that suited him, he straightway drove away or killed the English inhabitants, and then himself took possession. Gradually in this way the greater part of Northumberland, the land in which Paulinus and Aidan, Cadmon and Bede, had lived, was occupied by these pirates turned immigrant, and then, the English having been practically driven out of Northumberland, the invaders directed their attention to other parts of the country.

In the south of England, however, the vikings did not find such an easy conquest as they had found in the north. They made raids here and there, but when it came to the question of settling down and actually owning the land as some of their comrades had done in the north, the southern vikings met with a check. For now a little kingdom in the southern and western part of England gathered itself together and showed that all bravery and ability had not died out in Englishmen. This was the little kingdom of the West Saxons, and it was the glory of Wessex to bring forth a line of kings who were to save England from being completely overwhelmed by the Danes. The first great king of Wessex was named Egbert. It was Egbert's chief aim to unite as many of the smaller English kingdoms as possible, for he knew that the only hope of the English lay in such a union. He was so

successful in this that before his death he was acknowledged as the head of all the different kingdoms in England. At his death Egbert was succeeded by his son Athelwulf, who carried on the work his father had begun as best he could. But the vikings were coming in greater and greater bands, and London and Canterbury and many other places in the south were attacked and plundered. Athelwulf was not a very successful king, and the task which he left to his sons at his death was a difficult one. There were four of these sons. The eldest was named Athelbald, the next was Athelbert, and the third was Athelred. These three brothers became king one after the other, but each died after he had reigned only a few years. The fourth and youngest son of Athelwulf was Alfred, the strongest king the West Saxons had ever had to that time, and one of the greatest kings who has ever ruled over the English. He is, indeed, the only king of the English who has been called The Great, and Alfred the Great won his chief glory in saving England from the hands of the Danes.

VII

ALFRED THE GREAT

King Alfred was the youngest of four brothers. At the death of Athelwulf, the father of the four, the oldest son became king of the West Saxons. He lived only two years, and then the second son became king. Six years was the length of this son's reign, and five years the length of the reign of the brother who succeeded him. On the death of the last of his brothers in 871, Alfred, the youngest, became king of the West Saxons, and thus at the age of twenty-two he began his long and hard reign of thirty years, which was to mean so much, not merely for the West Saxons, but for all the English in England.

Alfred's father, Athelwulf, was a good and pious man, but not well fitted to rule a kingdom in such troublous times as these were in England. It was in Athelwulf's reign that the Danes first became a serious menace in the south of England; but Athelwulf seems to have done very little in preparation for defense against them. The Danes, however, were so unexpected in these first attacks, landing their troops

along the coast wherever it was undefended, and then, after they had taken all the plunder they could, sailing away again, that perhaps little could be done by the English in the way of preparation. It was only after the Danes had begun to come to southern England with armies of occupation that the English could do anything against them. You might suppose that the English would have been able to defend their coasts with their own fleets against the ships of the Danes. As a matter of fact, however, the English in Athelwulf's day had no ships. They had been living peaceful, quiet lives for the preceding two hundred years in England, the lives of farmers and herders of flocks, and in the course of this time they had lost all the sea-faring skill of their ancestors. They had long since given up making piratical expeditions to other lands, and thus had forgotten how to sail ships or how to build them. And it was Alfred himself who first began to build a fleet of ships to protect the English coasts.

While he was still a boy, Alfred made two long journeys. When he was four years old his father sent him on a visit to Rome. Alfred's father did not suppose that Alfred would understand much that he heard or saw on this journey, but being a very pious man, Athelwulf was anxious that his son should have the benefit of a blessing from the Pope's own hands. When the boy Alfred reached Rome, he was honorably entertained by the Pope, who received him as his god-child and also hallowed him as king. This hallowing of Alfred as king seems like taking time a

good deal by the forelock, since at that time not only his father but his three older brothers were still living, and there seemed little chance that Alfred would ever become king. But probably the Pope's hallowing was meant to be merely provisional, in case the unexpected should happen.

Alfred's second long journey was another visit which he made to Rome several years after the first, when he was eight years old. This time he went in company with his father, who, having given a tenth of all his private lands to the church, was now continuing his work of piety by going on a pilgrimage to the Holy City itself. This journey took over a year, and as Athelwulf and his court stopped at many interesting places, the time must have seemed short enough to the young Alfred. One of the places where Athelwulf stopped was at the court of Charles the Bald, who was the grandson of the Emperor Charlemagne; and while he was at the court of Charles, Athelwulf, whose wife, the mother of Alfred, had been dead for some time, was married to a daughter of the Emperor Charles. Her name was Judith, and she traveled back to England with her husband Athelwulf and her stepson Alfred.

As Alfred grew up he began to take part in the warfare with the Danes which went on continuously through the three short reigns of his older brothers. And when he himself became king in 871, being then only twenty-two years old, the Danes were still the most serious difficulty he had to face. Very little is known about Alfred's life and education before he

became king, but probably he had few opportunities for learning and studying. He says himself, in one of his own writings later, that when he became king he did not know of a single man south of the river Thames who could read or write Latin. Alfred did not learn Latin until he was a grown man, and then he had to import teachers from outside England to teach him. This strange condition of affairs was the result of the continual state of war which was caused by the attacks of the Danes, and the years of Alfred's youth, which should have been spent in quiet study, were actually passed in the turmoil and bustle of the camp.

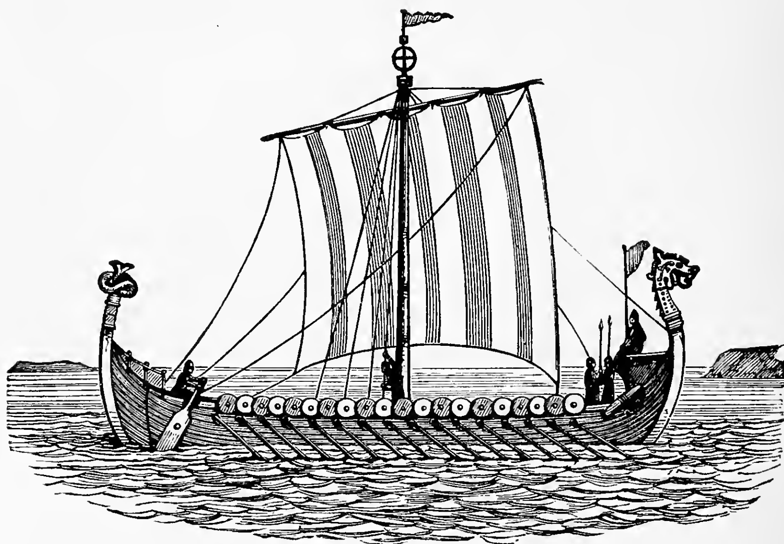
Slowly but apparently inevitably Alfred saw the Danes closing in upon him. By the time he became king they had occupied practically the whole of the country north of the Thames, and soon they began to cross over the Thames into Alfred's own kingdom of the West Saxons with the intention of settling there. The first invaders of Wessex were more or less successfully driven back, and in the year in which Alfred became king, the English won a victory over the Danes as a result of which a treaty of peace was made between the two sides. A few years later, however, the Danes, caring little for the promises they had given and having gathered together a great army under the command of a Dane named Guthrum, again set about the conquest of Wessex, the last stronghold of the English in England.

This time the Danes adopted tactics which they seem never to have used before, and consequently

they took the English entirely by surprise. Both Danes and English were accustomed to carry on their campaigns only in the summer, the Danes spending the cold months in their winter quarters and the English at their homes. But on this occasion, the Danes suddenly appeared in Wessex in the midst of winter, a week or so after Christmas. Alfred had no army ready to meet them, for his men were scattered all over the land at their various homes, and consequently the Danes ravaged and plundered at their own sweet wills. Alfred himself was hard pressed, but he managed to escape with a small band of faithful followers. He hid himself away at a place called Athelney. This was a little island of solid ground in the midst of a region of impassable swamps and marshes in Somersetshire. Here the Danes could not find Alfred, and from this retreat he began to plan for the recovery of his kingdom. It was a heavy task that lay before him, for the only spot of ground in all England at this time in the possession of an English king was this little island of Athelney.

But Alfred was not one to give in easily. He sent out word to the English wherever he could reach them, and soon he found an army beginning to gather together about him. By a few weeks after Easter he felt strong enough to come out from his hiding place, and then his army grew rapidly, for everybody was glad to see him again. Alfred was now ready to face his enemy, and he straightway sought him out at a place called Ethandun. A great battle was fought between the Danes and English, and the English put the

Danes to flight. The Danes managed, however, to intrench themselves within their fortifications, and the English therefore rode after them and besieged them for a fortnight. At the end of that time the Danes were compelled to surrender. They gave hostages to Alfred and took oaths of peace, and their king, Guthrum, agreed also to receive baptism. A few weeks



AN OLD NORTHERN SHIP OF WAR

later Guthrum and thirty of the most distinguished of the Danes came to Alfred at Aller near Athelney, and after that they went to one of Alfred's houses and were baptized, at a place called Wedmore. Alfred on his side treated Guthrum with great honor and gave to him many rich presents. And since this treaty between Alfred and Guthrum was completed at Wedmore, it is usually called the Peace of Wedmore. By the terms of the treaty, the Danes were to withdraw

from Wessex and leave Alfred and his people in peace. There was to be a Danish part of England, known as the Danelaw, north of the river Thames, and an English England, south of the Thames. Thus Alfred agreed, for the time being, to a division of the country of the English, realizing that only by strengthening themselves in one place, in Wessex, could the English ever hope to win back the northern regions from the Danes.

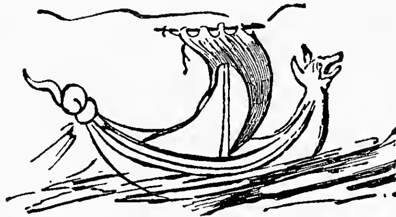
For some years after the treaty of Wedmore, Alfred lived in peace. These years of peace were not years of idleness on the part of Alfred. In the first place it was during this time that Alfred carried out some of the many plans for the general welfare of his people in which he was interested; and in the second place, realizing that the struggle with the Danes might begin again at any moment, he gave much attention to the organizing and strengthening of his army. When war actually began again in 893 the English showed the good effects of their training. In this year the Danes of the Danelaw, disregarding the promises given at Wedmore, joined forces with a great army of Danes, or Northmen, who had been ravaging in France, but who, having been driven out of that country, had now come over to England to try to get a footing in Alfred's kingdom of Wessex. It was an unlucky venture, however, on the part of the Danes. They fought numerous battles with the English, but always on the losing side. The Danes were finally so hard pressed that they left their wives and children and property behind them in a camp in East

Anglia, although it was their usual custom to carry everything with them, and fled, panic-stricken, traveling night and day, until they came to the old Roman town of Chester, near the western coast of England. This town had now been deserted for hundreds of years, but the Roman walls were so well built that they were still standing, as they are to this day, and behind these walls the Danes hoped to defend themselves. The English pursued them up to the very walls of Chester, cutting off as many of the Danes as they could before they got within the walls. But not being prepared to carry on a siege, the English then destroyed all the pasturage and provisions in the neighborhood of Chester and left the Danes in their stronghold. But the Danes also were without food for themselves or their horses, and consequently after the English had departed, they got back to East Anglia as best they could, and those who had no money with which to buy land from their kinsmen in the Danish parts of England seized ships along the coast and sailed away again, with little glory or booty to their credit as result of this expedition.

It was about this time that Alfred began to build ships of his own. His ships were much larger than the Danish ships, being twice as long. Some of them had sixty oars, some more, and since there were usually two men to each oar, besides the other warriors who did not row, these ships carried several hundred men each. The boats were made neither after the fashion of Danish or of Frisian ships, but according to Alfred's own designs. They stood higher in

the water, and were likewise swifter and steadier than the boats hitherto in use. Alfred had a number of Frisians in his service, and these Frisians, whose home was the region now known as Holland, were useful to the English in teaching them the almost forgotten art of sailing.

Learning at one time that six Danish ships had appeared along the southern coast, doing great damage everywhere, Alfred sent nine of his new ships in pursuit. The English contrived to pen the Danish ships within the narrow channel which runs between the



AN ENGLISH SHIP

Isle of Wight and the coast of Hampshire. Leaving three ships to guard the mouth of the channel, the English took six of their boats up into the channel. They found the Danish ships at the head of the channel, and after a fight they captured three of them. In the meantime the other three ships of the Danes had grounded, and the Danes had left their ships and gone up on land. The tide continuing to ebb, it was not long before the English ships were also grounded, very unluckily, however, three on one shore of the channel and three on the other. Then the English in the three ships that were grounded on the same side of the channel that the Danes were on also left their

ships and attacked the Danes on foot. The English were getting the better of the fight, but the flood tide coming in floated the Danish ships first and they got aboard and rowed away, with the English standing on shore and waiting for the tide to float their boats. But the men in the Danish boats were so weak from wounds and so worn out from fighting that they could not manage their boats, and when they got out of the quiet water of the channel, the sea cast the boats up on the shore. The men in the boats were taken prisoners and were carried off to Winchester, Alfred's capital, where they were hanged. Many times Alfred showed mercy to his prisoners, but here simple justice to his own people demanded that these pirates and destroyers should not be allowed to carry on their work without fear of punishment.

For the last four years of Alfred's life, the Danes left him and his country in peace. In their campaigns with the English, they had learned to have a wholesome respect for them, and though Alfred never fought merely for the sake of fighting, he had learned that one way of avoiding war was to show his enemies that he was strong enough to win.

In spite of the fact that a good part of Alfred's time was spent in battles and camps, by natural inclination he was much more a ruler and a scholar than a soldier. His duty to his country demanded a soldier's service of him, and this part of his duty he never shirked. But whenever there was peace, Alfred always turned gladly to other things. He was greatly interested in reforming the laws of the Eng-

lish, and he himself made a set of laws known as Alfred's Code. In many other ways he tried to get the English to take a proper pride and interest in their own affairs. Under his direction a history of England was prepared, beginning with early Roman times and coming down to Alfred's own day. It was continued after Alfred's death with a record of the events of each year, and this Chronicle, as it is called, was kept up in this way until after the coming of William the Conqueror to England. It is, therefore, a kind of diary of old English history, arranged by years instead of days, from the beginning down to the end at the arrival of the Normans. It is written in English, and it is, of course, one of the chief means by which we are able to know anything at all about England in these early times. Another historical work that Alfred was greatly interested in was Bede's HISTORY, and this work he had translated from the Latin of Bede into English. This also is an important book, but it ends at the death of Bede, which took place a hundred years before Alfred was born.

Alfred had many other plans for the improvement of his people. He wanted them to know all the best that had been thought and written in past ages, and accordingly he himself went to work, and he set others to work, translating some of the most important books of history, philosophy, geography and other subjects. These books were mostly written in Latin, and Alfred's translations were in English. But Alfred was well aware that comparatively few people in his day knew how to read and write even English, and

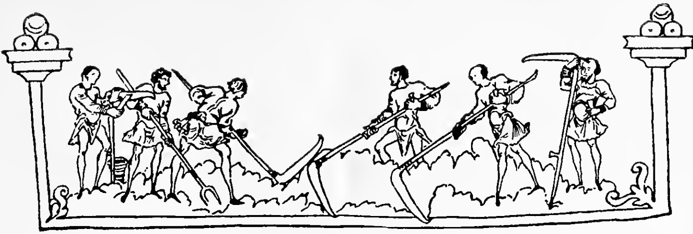
this state of affairs he was very eager to reform. He passed a decree that every English boy whose father had sufficient means should be sent to school until he could read and write English. This must have seemed a strange demand to a good many Englishmen of the time, for reading and writing were not usually supposed to be very important accomplishments, except for the clergy. But in this, as in many other ways, Alfred was ahead of his times. He thought that every English boy should first learn to read and write English, and that after that he might study Latin, if he wanted to prepare himself for one of the more learned callings. Just when it was that Alfred himself learned to read and write English it is hard to say. Probably, however, he had very little chance to learn English or anything else in his youth, except how to fight and to lead others in the fight. And we know that Alfred had reached the years of manhood before he was able to begin the study of Latin. Perhaps it was his own lack of opportunity that made Alfred so eager to give the opportunities of education to others.

With the many affairs of his kingdom continually to be attended to and with his own personal interests in learning and teaching, Alfred must always have been a very busy man. He could have accomplished as much as he did only by the most careful use of his time. There are several incidents in Alfred's life which show how methodical he was and how fully he realized the importance of doing things at their proper times. In order to learn Latin, he invited to

his court a certain Welsh priest named Asser, who afterward became Alfred's good friend, and at his death wrote his life. Alfred and Asser used to read together, and after a time, seeing that he might forget some of the interesting things which he wanted to remember, Alfred formed the habit of writing down in a book all passages in his reading which he thought might later be of importance. This book, called Alfred's HANDBOOK, has unfortunately been lost, but whatever it contained, we may be sure that Alfred derived a great deal of benefit from having always at his hand for consultation such a daily record of his reading. Another evidence of Alfred's realization of the value of time is the invention of his candle-clock. In his day the English had no clocks, and told time only by the position of the sun. Such a method, however, was not very useful at night or on days when the sky was clouded. Having portioned out the different parts of the twenty-four hours of the day to their various uses, Alfred found it necessary to know the time more exactly than mere guessing could tell him. He accordingly had candles made, all of the same weight and size. These candles he marked along the side in twelve equal divisions, and the size of the candles was such that just six of them burned through twenty-four hours. Each division of each candle, therefore, burned one-third of one hour. This method of keeping time Alfred used wherever he happened to be. Often, however, since draughts of air were continually blowing through the loosely built houses in which people then lived, or in the tents in

which Alfred spent so much of his time, the candles melted the wax so that it ran down the sides, and the six did not last entirely through the twenty-four hours. To get over this difficulty, Alfred had a lantern made. It consisted of a wooden frame with panes of very thin pieces of horn. When shaved quite thin, horn is almost as transparent as glass, and Alfred's candles therefore gave as much light in the lantern as they did out of it, and moreover were completely protected from the draughts of air.

Alfred was born at a place called Wantage, in Berkshire, where his father had one of his various towns. He was only fifty-two years old when he died in the year 901. He was buried at Winchester, the capital of the West Saxons, in the New Minster, a church which Alfred himself began to build and which was finished by his son, Edward. England has produced greater warriors and greater scholars than Alfred, but among all English rulers there has never been one who has done his duty, both as king and man, more effectively and simply than Alfred. He defended his country in time of danger, and in times of peace he helped his people to live better and truer lives. He is called Alfred the Great, but he might as well be called Alfred the Good, for it was his goodness, first of all, united with his power and courage and wisdom, which made him the remarkable man he was.



VIII

STORIES ABOUT KING ALFRED

After a great man has died, it almost always happens that a number of legends or stories grow up around his name. Often it is hard to tell whether these stories are true or not, and often it is quite certain that they are not true. In spite of the fact, however, that these stories may not be true, they are nearly always interesting as showing how the people of the time thought of the person who is made the hero of them. The events themselves may not actually have happened, but the stories may still be true to the character of the person about whom they are told. And it is in this way that some of the stories that grew up around Alfred should be regarded. We cannot be sure that they are actually true, but that need not prevent us from taking them for what they are worth.

One of the earliest of these stories is that which tells how Alfred learned to read. The story starts out by saying that Alfred was very fond of hunting and other games, and was very skillful in them, but that, although he was already twelve years old, he had

not yet learned to read. He was, however, deeply interested in English poetry, such as the bards recited, with its descriptions of battles and sea journeys and other adventures, and he had learned many of these poems by heart. Now one day his mother had a large volume of English poetry, all written out on fine parchment, with beautifully ornamented capital letters and illustrations, such as the old monks used to love to put in their manuscripts, and this book Alfred and his brothers admired greatly. But none of them could read it. Then their mother, seeing how their interest had been aroused, said: "This beautiful book shall belong to that one of you who is first able to read it." Alfred immediately set to work under the direction of a teacher, and in a short time he had learned to read. And his mother, then, having heard him read through the songs of the book, kept her promise to him and gave him the book.

Another famous story is that of Alfred and the cakes. Here again, if the events which this story tells did not actually happen, there is no reason why they might not have happened. Alfred, in this story, is supposed to be a fugitive from the Danes. He has fled to Athelney, and, for fear of his life, he is keeping himself hidden away as secretly as possible. He finds a refuge in the hut of a swineherd with whom he stays for some time. Now the swineherd knows who Alfred is, but on the principle that two can keep a secret, but three cannot, the swineherd's wife is not taken into the confidence of her husband and Alfred. One day the wife of the swineherd set some cakes by

the fire to bake, and then, being busied about her other work, she asked Alfred, who was sitting by the fire mending his bow and arrows, to watch the cakes while they were baking. Alfred promised to look after the cakes, but his mind apparently was more intent on his bow and arrows than on the cakes, for he forgot all about them until the woman came running in, scolding him for letting the cakes burn. "You are glad enough to eat the cakes when they are done," she said; "but too lazy to turn them to keep them from burning."

There is a sequel to this story, which says that the swineherd, in whose hut Alfred took refuge, afterward became Bishop of Winchester. His name was Denewulf, and although he was only a poor swineherd, King Alfred, seeing that Denewulf was a man of great natural ability, had him educated and afterward he gave him the high office of bishop in the church. Thus Denewulf's faithfulness to Alfred in his time of trouble was rewarded, and Denewulf's scolding wife, after she became a bishop's lady, doubtless had more watchful servants than Alfred to look after her cakes when they were baking.

A story, which, in different forms, is told of a great many heroes, is also told of Alfred. According to this story, he disguised himself as a Danish harper and went into the camps of the Danes and played on his harp and sang songs before the Danish king, Guthrum. In this way he was able to observe the strength of his enemy, and to make his own attack upon them the more effective.

Finally, there is one other story of King Alfred which is worth knowing, the story of Alfred and St. Cuthbert. You may remember that St. Cuthbert was the person who had the vision of Aidan's soul being carried to Heaven by angels on the night of Aidan's death. Cuthbert afterward became a great leader and teacher in Northumberland, and after his death on account of his holiness and his good works, he came to be regarded as a saint. Alfred seems to have thought that he was under the special protection of St. Cuthbert. The story tells how St. Cuthbert helped Alfred out of his difficulties at Athelney, although it makes the mistake of calling Athelney Glastonbury and of saying that Alfred spent three years in this retreat. As a matter of fact, Alfred was in Athelney only from January to a short time after Easter. The story was told, evidently, by some one who was not familiar with all the details of Alfred's history and who consequently made some mistakes. But such as it is, the tale is as follows:

When Alfred the King was driven out of his kingdom by the heathen Danes under Guthrum, he fled to the isle of Glastonbury, where he remained in hiding for three years. Toward the end of that time, on a certain day, it happened that all his people had gone out to catch fish for their food, leaving Alfred alone at home with his wife, the queen, and only one servant. Then, unexpectedly, there appeared a pilgrim at the door, begging for food. "What have we to eat here in the house?" asked Alfred of the servant. The servant answered and said: "Sire, there is

here in the house but one loaf of bread and a little wine." "Then give half of the loaf and half of the wine to this poor pilgrim," said Alfred to the servant. As Alfred commanded, so it was done, and the pilgrim took the bread and the wine and, thanking the king for his charity, he went away. But afterward, when the servant went into the house again, what was his surprise to find that the loaf was whole and that there was just as much wine as before the stranger's share had been taken out! He wondered greatly at this marvel, and the king likewise, and they were puzzled to know also how this stranger had come to the island, since one could reach it only by water and the stranger had no boat. Soon after this the followers of the king who had gone out to fish came back, and they had three boats full of fish. "Behold," they said, "in this one day we have caught more fish than in all the three years we have been on this island." And again the king wondered greatly at the number of fish his men had caught.

That night the king lay on his bed, but he could not sleep, and his mind dwelt on the strange things that had happened during the day. As he thus lay thinking, he was aware of a great light, as bright as the shining of the sun, and by this light he saw an old man, with black hair, who was clad in the dress of a priest. He wore a miter on his head, and in his right hand he held a book of the Gospels, richly decorated with gold and jewels. This old man gave his blessing to the king, and the king asked him who he was. "Alfred, my son," answered the man, "be of

good cheer. I am the stranger to whom you gave the bread and wine to-day, and my name is Cuthbert, the soldier of Christ. And give ear now to what I shall tell you, for henceforth I shall be your guard and protector, and the friend of your sons after you. Do, therefore, as I shall now tell you to do. Early in the morning go forth and blow your horn three times, so that all your enemies may hear it and be afraid. And before the end of the day you shall have five hundred warriors about you in answer to the blowing of your horn, all armed and ready for the fray. Others, too, shall come, and at the end of seven days all the people of this realm shall come to you and shall help you to win back your kingdom. With this army you shall fight your enemies, and have no fear but you shall overcome them. For you are chosen to be king over all Britain, and your sons after you shall be rulers, not only over the kingdom of your fathers, but over all the land of the English." With these words the light disappeared and the vision of St. Cuthbert passed away; but Alfred was greatly strengthened at heart, because he knew that, with God and St. Cuthbert's aid, he would now be able to withstand his enemies.

With the first light of the morning, Alfred arose and sailed over to the land and there he blew his horn three times, so that his enemies were filled with fear and his friends with joy at the sound of it. Straightway his friends came to him until there were five hundred of them, the bravest and the strongest in the land, all ready to obey his commands. Then Alfred

told them of the vision which he had seen the night before and of the message he had received from St. Cuthbert. All the men were greatly encouraged to hear these words, and when the whole army was gathered together they met the heathen Danes in battle and won a great victory over them. And thus it came to pass that St. Cuthbert's words were fulfilled; for Alfred ruled over the whole realm of Britain and his son Edward was likewise ruler of the land after him.

IX

FARTHEST NORTH

Long before the days of Nansen and of Peary, there were bold sailors who risked their lives on dangerous and distant voyages of discovery. Northmen and Angles and Saxons were fascinated by the mystery of the seas, by the desire to know what lay beyond the level plain of waters which seemingly stretched away without beginning or end. The Serpent of the Earth the ancient Northmen called the ocean, because it wound in and out, and with its many coils encircled every inch of the many thousands of miles of the earth's coast line. To them it must have seemed an endless and an unfailingly interesting adventure to explore all these many windings of the old serpent-ocean.

Very different, however, were the ships of these ancient explorers from the great vessels which the modern seaman has provided for him. In those days there were no steam engines to produce power to drive the ships, but the sailors must depend upon the winds, the ocean currents, and the oars which they worked with their own strong hands. Nor were the ships of that

time large enough to carry many men or great store of provisions. Worst of all, the ship captains had neither compass nor chart to guide them. When they were near land they steered their course by landmarks, and at night they could tell the directions by the stars. But when the skies were clouded and the shores were hidden by the thick banks of fog which so often hang over them in those cold northern lands, they were at the mercy of the wind and weather, with no other help than their own uncertain sense of direction. It takes courage now to sail off into an unknown region, but it took more courage in the days when the chances of safely returning were much less than they now are.

Ohthere was a Northman who once came to visit King Alfred at his court in England, and who told Alfred the story of his voyage around the North Cape. Alfred fortunately wrote down what Ohthere told him, and still more fortunately for us, Alfred's narrative, written more than a thousand years ago, can still be read by any one who knows the language of that day. Ohthere told King Alfred that he lived farthest north of all Northmen, and that his home was in Norway on the shores of the North Sea. To the north of his home, he said, there still lay much land, but it was all waste land, where nobody lived, except a few Finns, here and there, who managed to keep alive by hunting in winter and fishing in summer. One time, said Ohthere, he thought he would like to find out how far the land really extended to the north, and also if any people lived beyond the waste land. He sailed

north for three days, along the coast of Norway, keeping the land always on the starboard side and the open sea on the larboard. By that time he had gone as far north as the whale-hunters ever go. Then he sailed due north for another three days, at the end of which time he found that the land bent eastward, and he had to wait for a west wind and a trifle from the north. In this direction he sailed as far as he could go in four days, still keeping the land on his starboard side. At the end of the four days he had to wait for a due north wind, because the land bent there directly south. This means that by that time Ohthere had doubled the North Cape, and though he did not know it, had passed the northernmost point of land in Europe.

For five days Ohthere sailed southward along the eastern side of the Scandinavian peninsula. He came then to a large river which flowed down from the land, and he sailed up this river. He said that he was afraid to sail past the river, because beyond the river the land was all inhabited and he feared the people might be hostile. Ohthere did not mention the name of this river, but it could have been no other than the river Dwina. In all the time since he had left home he had found no inhabited land until he came to this river. The land was entirely unoccupied except for a few hunters, fishers and fowlers, and these were all Finns. The people who lived on the other side of this great river were Permians, said Ohthere, and they had settled and cultivated their land very well.

The Permians told Ohthere many stories both about their own land and about the country which lay beyond them, but Ohthere could not be sure what was true and what was not true, because he did not see these things himself. For this reason he either did not think it worth while telling King Alfred these stories or King Alfred did not think it worth while writing them down, and so we know nothing about them.

Other things, however, he did tell the king which he knew about. He said that he went on this voyage not only in order to explore the land, but also to get some tusks of the walrus, which are valuable as ivory, and also to get walrus hides, out of which to make ropes for ships. Some of the walrus tusks he brought with him as a present to King Alfred. But he said that the whales in that country were not very large, not more than seven ells long. In his own land, he said, there was the best whale-hunting. There the whales are eight and forty ells long, and the largest are fifty ells long. He said that he and five other men killed sixty of these whales in two days.

Ohthere was a rich man in his own country, but his wealth consisted almost altogether of reindeer. He still had, when he visited King Alfred, six hundred reindeer left, and he had already sold some. Among those in his herd there were six decoy reindeer. These are very valuable, because with them the Finns manage to catch wild reindeer. Although Ohthere was one of the foremost men in his land, he had only twenty cattle, and twenty sheep, and twenty

swine, and what little land he plowed, he plowed with horses. This seemed very strange to King Alfred, for the Anglo-Saxons always used oxen for plowing. But the Northmen, said Ohthere, get most of their wealth from the taxes which they collect from the Finns. These taxes consist mainly of the skins of animals, of the feathers of birds, of whalebone, and of the ropes which are made from the hides of whales and seals. Each man pays a tax according to his rank. The highest in rank has to pay fifteen skins of the marten, five of the reindeer, and one bear skin, besides ten measures of feathers, a coat made either out of bear or otter skin, and two ship's ropes. Both of these ropes must be sixty ells long, and one must be made out of whale's hide, the other out of seal's.

Ohthere said that the district in which he lived in Norway was called Helgeland, and that nobody lived north of him. He said that one time he sailed south from his home to a port called Sciringesheal. With a favorable wind, it took more than a month to sail this distance, if one camped on shore at night and sailed only in the daytime. On the starboard side, one would first have Iceland, and then the islands which lie between Iceland and Britain. Then comes the island of Britain all the way until one reaches Sciringesheal, and of course on the larboard side one has, during the whole voyage, the coast of Norway. Then Ohthere said he sailed eastward until he came to the land of the Angles and Saxons, where the English had lived before they came to Britain. And all this land he said now belonged to Denmark.

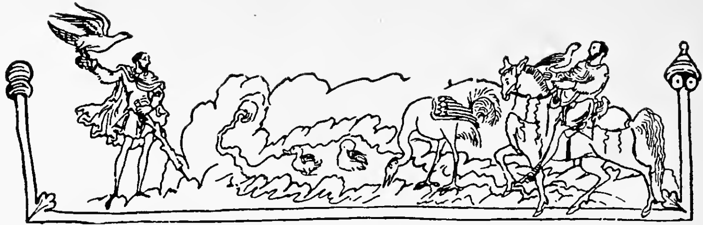
What other voyages Ohthere made we do not know, for King Alfred has said nothing about them. We can only hope that he made many successful ones, that he got all the walrus tusks and whale-hide ropes he wanted, and that he finally returned safely to end his days among his reindeer and other possessions in his far northern home. But though King Alfred has told of no more voyages of Ohthere, he has told of a voyage which a sailor named Wulfstan made. Wulfstan set sail from a port in Denmark and sailed eastward until he came to the mouth of the Vistula river, and to the land of the Ests, who lived on the eastern shores of the Baltic ocean. Estland, said Wulfstan, is a large country, in which there are many towns and in each town a king. They have plenty of honey in Estland, and plenty of fish. The kings and the rich men, said Wulfstan, drink mare's milk, and the poor men and the slaves drink mead. But strangest of all, it seemed to Wulfstan, and to King Alfred, too, when he told him of it, was the way in which the people of Estland buried their dead.

It was the custom of the Ests to burn the bodies of the dead, but before they did so, they allowed them to lie in state for a long time, sometimes a month, sometimes two months. The kings and the rich men lie in state sometimes a half year, depending on the amount of their property. All the time the body is lying in the house, the dead man's friends and relatives spend the days in feasting and drinking and in the playing of games. Most of the dead man's property they use up in this way, but on the day when the

body is to be buried, they run races for what is left. The races are arranged in this fashion. All the property is divided into five or six parts, according to the amount of it, and the largest and most valuable portion is put down on the ground about a mile from the town. Then they place a second portion, smaller and less valuable, a little nearer to the town, and a third portion, still smaller and less valuable, a little nearer to the town than the second portion, and so on until all the portions are thus put down on the earth. Then all the people in the neighborhood who have swift horses gather together about five or six miles from the place where the largest portion is placed on the earth, and at a signal they all race toward the property. The man who has the swiftest horse comes to the largest portion first, and it then belongs to him. The man who has the next swiftest horse gets the second portion, and so on until all the portions are taken. And if there are more racers than portions, then of course some get nothing. After the dead man's property is all spent in this way, in the funeral feasting and in the racing for the remainder, then the body is borne out and burned, together with the weapons and garments that had belonged to the man when he was alive. It is considered a great disgrace among the Ests, said Wulfstan, if a single bone is found unburned. Moreover, says Wulfstan, the Ests possess an art by which they can create cold, and by applying this cold to the bodies of their dead they are able to keep them above ground so long without decay. If you set down a vessel of ale or of water,

says Wulfstan, the Ests can cause it to be frozen over, whether it be winter or summer.

Wulfstan does not say, like Ohthere, that he tells only what he has seen, and perhaps his story of the art of making artificial ice among the Ests needs to be taken with a grain of salt. It may be true, however, and certainly Wulfstan was not the last traveler to come back from strange lands with true stories that were wonderful and hard to believe.



X

THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURG

At a time when the English were greatly in need of strong rulers, they were fortunate enough to have three brave and able kings, one after the other. The first of these was Alfred, who checked the Danes in what threatened to be a complete conquest of England. The second was Alfred's son, Edward, who began to win back from the Danes the lands which Alfred was forced to yield to them by the terms of the treaty between the English and Danes at Wedmore. And the third was Edward's son, Alfred's grandson, and his name was Athelstan. It was Athelstan who completed the work of Alfred and Edward, becoming, by his great victory at Brunanburg, the master of all England, both Danish and English.

We first hear of Athelstan when he was a little boy. Apparently he was a favorite with his grandfather Alfred, for when Athelstan was six years old Alfred made him a present of a purple cloak, a belt set with jewels, and a little sword with a golden scabbard. It was at an early age, therefore, that the

young warrior began his training as a soldier. And as he grew up he must have had plenty of opportunities for seeing how warfare was carried on and for disciplining himself as a fighter and a leader. For there was continual battle between Edward and the Danes during the whole of Edward's reign. Athelstan was thirty years old when Edward died, and the Danes, thinking this a likely time to regain what they had lost, stirred up hostilities on all sides against Athelstan, the new king. But Athelstan had not grown up in a camp of soldiers for nothing. He fought his enemies at every turn, and though he was not always successful, on the whole he gained more than he lost. He first won back the regions in the south of England which had been taken away from the English and then he turned his attention to the north.

The Danes saw that it was time for them to make as strong a stand against Athelstan as they could. Athelstan had gathered together a great army, which was commanded by himself and his brother Edmund. The Danes on their side had an army which was the largest that had ever been seen in England. It was made up of Danes and Scots and Welshmen, in short of all the people who were opposed to the English in the north of England. There were several kings in this army, but the chief commander was King Anlaf, a Dane, who was an old and experienced warrior. It was in the year 937 that the two armies came together and faced each other at a place called Brunanburg in Northumberland.

The story is told that before the battle King Anlaf came into the English camp disguised as a bard to spy out the strength of his enemies, and that he sang and played on his harp before King Athelstan and his men. When Anlaf had finished playing, according to the story, Athelstan rewarded him with a present of gold. Anlaf took the gold because he was afraid he would be found out if he refused it; but as he thought it beneath the dignity of a king such as he was to keep money which had been paid to him as though he were a common minstrel playing for hire, when he got away he buried it in the earth. One of Athelstan's soldiers saw him burying the gold and, recognizing that the minstrel was Anlaf in disguise, he told the king that Anlaf had been in his camp, had found out how strong his army was, and had seen where the king's tent was pitched. Athelstan asked this soldier why he had not taken Anlaf prisoner when he recognized him and had not delivered him into Athelstan's hands. But the soldier replied that at one time he had been in Anlaf's service, and consequently the very same pledge of loyalty that he had given to Athelstan he had before given to Anlaf. And he added that if he had been untrue to his word to Anlaf, how could Athelstan ever expect him to be true to him? He advised Athelstan to move his tent to another position, however, and to await the beginning of the battle.

Athelstan did as the soldier suggested, and soon afterwards the Bishop of Sherborne, who had just reached the camp with his troops, pitched his tents

in the place where Athelstan's had been. That night Anlaf and his men broke into the English camp, and, going straight to the place where they supposed the king to be, they entered the Bishop of Sherborne's tent and killed him. Discovering then that this was not the king, they passed on until they found the place where the king's tent was now pitched. Little suspecting that the Danes would make an attack in the night, Athelstan was still asleep when they appeared before his tent. Awakened by the noise of fighting, he sprang up and called his men to arms. He reached out his hand for his sword, but unfortunately it fell out of the scabbard, and in the darkness he was unable to find it. Then breathing a prayer to St. Aldhelm, he put his hand again to the scabbard, and there miraculously, as the story tells, he found a sword in answer to his prayer. With this sword he led the fight against Anlaf, and won over all his enemies a glorious victory.

Whether this story of the sword and Anlaf's night attack is altogether true or not, it is quite certain that Athelstan did win a great victory over his enemies at Brunanburg. Some Englishman who may have been present at the battle itself made a poem about it and this poem we still have. The poem tells how they fought from early morning till late in the evening, and how five kings lay dead on that battlefield, as well as seven of the earls of Anlaf. The Danes had no need to rejoice, says the poet, at that day's work, when, with their little remnant, they crowded their ships afloat and sailed away from Eng-

land. Behind them they left many a one dead on the field of battle, for the black raven with horny beak, and the dusky-coated eagle and the gray wolf of the forest to feast upon. Never before, he continues, since the Angles and Saxons came up over the broad seas was there such great slaughter in the island of the English.

This is the story of Athelstan's great victory over the Danes at Brunanburg as it is told by the English historians. Luckily, however, the Danes have also left an account of the battle in one of the Norse sagas, and this account tells us many things which the English historians left out. The battle was one that the Danes were not likely soon to forget, and their bards and minstrels must often have sung the story of the great fight at Brunanburg. According to the Norse saga, Athelstan and Edmund had in their army a great many Danish soldiers, and it is interesting to see that by this time some of the Danes in England were willing to take sides with the English. These Danish soldiers in the English army were commanded by two brothers from Norway, Egil and Thorolf, who naturally are made a great deal of in the Norse saga. Now it cannot be supposed that Egil and Thorolf were fighting on the side of Athelstan merely out of love for the English. As a matter of fact they were fighting for pay, and they expected a reward of gold and other treasure if they helped Athelstan to win a victory. As bold and hardy, and almost as savage and fierce as wild beasts of the forest, these two brothers bore the brunt of the bat-

tle at Brunanburg, and Athelstan had reason enough to be grateful for what they did on that day.

The saga says that after Athelstan and Anlaf had collected their armies, King Athelstan sent messages to King Anlaf, offering to fight a pitched battle with him. Now it was a common custom in that time for two armies to agree to fight at a certain time and at a certain place, and after such an agreement was made, it was considered a disgrace for either side to commit any act of hostility until the battle began. After the battlefield was chosen, it was marked off with hazel branches, so that everybody might know just where the battle was to take place. Both Athelstan and Anlaf agreed that they would bring their armies to this place which they had chosen for their battlefield, and which, according to the custom, had been marked off with hazel branches. They agreed also that whichever one got there first should wait one week for the other before he should consider that the truce was broken.

The two armies then began gradually to assemble at the battlefield, the men of Anlaf's army pitching their tents at the north end of the field and the men of Athelstan's army at the south end. The field was very level, so that neither side had the advantage. Athelstan's men had a great many tents, stretching all the way across the field. In reality, however, these tents were mostly for show, since there was no one at all in every third tent, and not a great many in the others. But when Anlaf's men came over to visit at the English tents, as they might very well do

since there was peace between Danes and English until the battle began, then all the English came out in front of their tents, saying that their army was so great that there was not room for them all in the tents. And as they did not allow Anlaf's men to enter any of the tents, the Danes were greatly impressed by what they saw.

The English, however, were not as confident as they seemed. For one thing they needed more men, and, for another, Athelstan their leader had not yet arrived. They were expecting him day by day with a large army, but the time passed and at last the week of waiting which had been agreed on by Athelstan and Anlaf went by, and still Athelstan had not come. Then the English who had gathered at the battlefield, fearing that Anlaf might attack them as soon as the week was up, sent messengers to Anlaf under the pretense that these messengers came from Athelstan. The messengers said to Anlaf that Athelstan was all ready for battle with a vast army, but that he was greatly disturbed at the thought of the bloodshed that would take place if the two armies fought. The messengers said then that Athelstan would give them a large sum of money, a silver shilling for every plow in Anlaf's kingdom, if the Danes would withdraw from the battle and become the friends of the English. This supposed offer of Athelstan's was debated back and forth for a long time in the Danish camp, some urging that the money should be accepted, and others saying that it should be refused, because if Athelstan wanted peace, they said he would

offer more if this first offer was refused. They finally agreed to send the messengers back to ask for more, and the messengers, glad of the delay, asked for a truce of three days, one day to go back to their camp, a second day to discuss the matter with King Athelstan and a third day to return with Athelstan's reply to the Danish camp. To this the Danes agreed, and when the English found, on reaching their camp, that Athelstan had not yet arrived, on the third day they returned to the Danish camp with another supposed offer from their king. They said that, besides all he had offered before, Athelstan would give a shilling to every freeborn man in the Danish army, a mark in gold to every atheling in command of a band of thanes, and five marks in gold to every earl. Again the Danes debated the offer, and at last Anlaf decided to accept it, on condition that Athelstan granted to him also the whole of Northumberland, with all the taxes and other income from the country. The English messengers asked for another three days to consider this proposal, and they requested that at the end of the three days Anlaf should send messengers to the English camp to learn Athelstan's decision. To this the Danes agreed, for the English messengers said they thought that Athelstan would gladly accept Anlaf's terms.

When the English got back to their camp, they were rejoiced to find that Athelstan had arrived at last and that the army was all ready for battle. They then told King Athelstan how they had made these offers to the Danes in order to prolong the truce, and

the king had his answer ready for the Danish messengers when they arrived. "Tell your king," said he, "that we will give him leave to go away on these conditions: that he return to me all the booty he has wrongfully taken in the land of the English, and that he acknowledge himself hereafter my subject and my man. This and no other tribute we will yield him." When the Danish messengers had heard this, they hurried back to their camp, where they arrived about midnight. When they had awakened Anlaf and had told him their message, and had told him also that Athelstan had only that day come back to the English camp, then Anlaf saw that the English had played a trick on him. During all these days that he had been trying to squeeze more tribute out of them, the English had been gathering together more men and strengthening themselves in every way. But Anlaf decided to delay no longer, and he immediately got his army ready for battle.

The English, on their side, were also soon ready, and Athelstan, in arranging his forces, divided them into two parts. One of these divisions Athelstan himself commanded, and at the van he placed the most daring of his men, with Egil, the Dane, at their head. The other division he wished to put under the command of Thorolf, Egil's brother. But Egil did not approve of this. "I do not want to be separated from Thorolf," said he; "put us in the place where there will be the hardest fighting, but put us there together." But Thorolf said, "Let the king put us where he pleases, for it is our business to do as the

king commands." "Have your will then, brother," answered Egil at this, "but I know that this is a change I shall deeply regret." In spite of Egil's protest, therefore, the divisions were made as the king commanded.

Neither Thorolf nor Egil wore a coat of mail in this battle, but each had a broad and thick shield, a helmet to protect the head, and a sword. Thorolf's sword was a strong and good weapon which he called The Long, and Egil carried a well-tried blade which was named The Viper. It was not long before the fighting began in earnest, and Thorolf and Egil were in the very thickest of it. In the excitement of the battle, however, it happened that Thorolf pressed so far forward that there were very few of his men about him. Just then a band of the enemy rushed in from a side where they were not expected, and setting upon Thorolf, they pierced him through with many spears. When Thorolf's standard bearer, who had pressed forward with his leader, saw that Thorolf had fallen, he fell back with his standard into the ranks of Thorolf's men. The fighting continued, but the English side retreated still further, and the enemy raised a shout of victory when they saw that Thorolf was slain. When Egil heard that shout from his part of the field and when he looked over and saw that Thorolf's standard was retreating, he knew that Thorolf was not following it. He rushed forward, and soon learning what had happened from Thorolf's men, he drove the soldiers back into the battle. With The Viper in his hand, he led the attack, and so fast

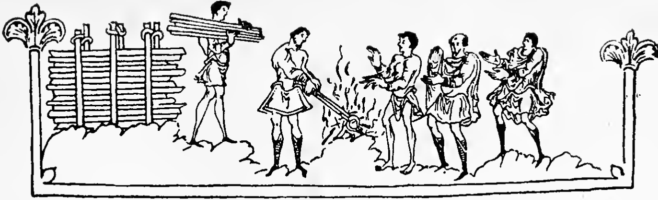
and furious were the blows he struck that it was not long before he had well avenged the death of his brother and had put this division of the enemy to flight. Seizing his opportunity, Athelstan followed up Egil's attack, and he made such a fierce onslaught on the center of Anlaf's army that it was soon scattered in flight and Anlaf himself lay dead on the field of battle. Egil and the rest of the English forces pursued the fleeing Danes, and they showed no mercy to any they caught. Egil especially was filled with the fury of an enraged lion, and long after the others had given up the pursuit, he sought out the escaping Danes and slew every one he overtook. When he had killed as many as he wanted, he came back to where Thorolf's body lay, and prepared it with all the proper ceremonies for burial. He put a gold ring on each of Thorolf's arms, and then after the body had been placed in the grave, all of Egil's men together built up a great mound of earth and stones over it.

Having cared for the burial of his dead comrade and brother, Egil went back to Athelstan's camp, where all the English were feasting and rejoicing over their great victory. When Athelstan saw Egil come into the hall where he and all his men were gathered together, he sent word that Egil should be given a place on the high seat on the side of the hall opposite to him. Egil sat down and threw his shield on the floor in front of him. He still had his helmet on his head, and he placed The Viper across his knees. He said not a word, but at times he drew

the sword half out of its scabbard and then slammed it back again. Egil had a wide forehead and very heavy eyebrows; his nose was short but very broad and his lips were long and thick. His chin and jaws were also very broad, and he had an extremely thick neck and large shoulders. His eyes were black and his skin was dark, and his hair was the color of the gray wolf. Egil looked savage and fierce when he was angry, and now he was both angry and sorrowful. He would not have the drink that was carried to him, but he sat there silently and moved his huge eyebrows up and down, one after the other; but the saga does not say that a single tear came to his eyes. Athelstan sat in his high seat, opposite Egil, and he likewise had his sword on his knee. After they had sat thus for a time, Athelstan drew his sword from its sheath, and taking a fine and large gold ring from his arm, he hung it on the point of the blade of the sword. Then he arose, and walking across the floor, he held the ring out to Egil over the fire. Egil stood up, took The Viper from its scabbard and strode toward the king. He stuck his sword into the ring, and drawing it to him, he walked back to his seat. The king sat down and then Egil sat down. Egil put the ring on his arm and after he had done so, his brows became smoother. His sword and his helmet he put down in front of him with his shield, and then he took a deer-horn which was carried to him and drank the drink that was in it.

After this Egil spoke with the men and drank his share at the feasting. The king had two chests filled

with silver brought into the hall, and these he gave to Egil, partly for himself and partly for his father to pay for the death of his son Thorolf. "And if you will stay with me," he said to Egil, "I will give you honor and property and rank as great as you yourself may choose." Egil was greatly pleased at these gracious words of the king, and he thanked him for his gifts and his friendly promises. All that winter Egil remained with the king, but when spring came he told the king that he must go back to Norway and care for the needs of Asgerd, Thorolf's wife, and for the needs of their children, if any were living. The king told Egil that he might go if he thought he must, but that he would rather Egil stayed in England. "I go first where it is my duty to go," said Egil, after he had thanked the king, "but certainly if I can I shall return to claim the promises you have made me." Then Egil got his ship ready and soon after he sailed away with a hundred men to Norway.



XI

THE ABBOT OF GLASTONBURY

In the southern part of England, not far from the isle of Athelney where King Alfred found a refuge from the Danes, there is a very ancient town called Glastonbury. Though now the water has all been drained off, the whole region in which this town lies was in earlier days marshy and swampy, and Glastonbury, like Athelney, was originally built on an island of solid ground surrounded by the waters of the marsh. From very early times men have dwelt at Glastonbury. Even before the coming of the Romans to Britain, the original natives of the island probably had a town here, and we know that Glastonbury was the site of a temple in the Roman days of Britain. To the Celts, after they became Christians, the isle of Glastonbury was a sacred place, and concerning it they had many traditions and beliefs. The Celtic name was one which meant the Isle of Glass, the still waters of the inland lakes and streams in which the island stood suggesting the name because of their glassy surface. Another name which the Celts had for the place was Avalon, and they believed that it was to this place King Arthur came at his death. "I

am going a long way," so the poet makes him say to his faithful friend, Sir Bedevere,

> "To the island-valley of Avilion,
> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
> And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
> Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."
> So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
> Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
> That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
> Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
> With swarthy webs.

Here, according to the old stories, it was supposed that Arthur would remain, sleeping the sleep of death, until the world was ready for him again, and then he will return and renew his rule among men.

In this happy isle of Avalon, the Anglo-Saxons after they had settled in England likewise found a peaceful retreat. They called the place Glastonbury, this name being merely an English translation of the Celtic word which means Isle of Glass. The Celts, who were Christianized long before the Anglo-Saxons, had established an abbey church at Glastonbury, and after the Anglo-Saxons became Christians, they continued and enlarged this church until it became an important center of religion and learning. During the early years of the Anglo-Saxons, Glastonbury prospered in peace. With the coming of the Danes to England, however, Glastonbury suffered as all other churches and monasteries suffered. It was not only plundered by the heathen, but in the troubled times

during which the English gave so much of their energy to fighting the Danes, places of learning and religion were allowed to fall into neglect. Yet probably at no time was Glastonbury entirely without its teachers and students, and after the battle of Brunanburg, when the Danes had been brought to terms for the time being by Athelstan, it was from this monastery at Glastonbury that a great leader of men came forth to teach the English again some of the things which they had forgotten during the many years of warfare.

This leader of men was named Dunstan. He was a member of a noble family, and when he was still a young boy, his parents sent him to be taught at Glastonbury Abbey. Dunstan had a quick and inquiring mind, and though the teaching at Glastonbury was at that time probably poor, his own industry and enthusiasm made up for some of its defects. After a few years Dunstan's friends procured for him an invitation to come to King Athelstan's court as a kind of squire or member of the king's bodyguard. In this way Dunstan had opened to him the possibility of a political career, and as he was a very ambitious youth, he must have considered this his first step toward fortune. But Dunstan's stay at King Athelstan's court was of short duration. He seems to have excited the envy of the other youths in Athelstan's household, who had probably never been to school at all, by reason of his greater learning and skill in arts with which these young soldiers were generally unfamiliar. They accused him, therefore,

of having to do with magic, and in the end succeeded in having him dismissed from Athelstan's service. As he was riding away from the town, he was set upon by a band of his young companions, was bound hand and foot, and then thrown into a pool of water, probably to see whether he would float or sink, the popular superstition of that time being that a person who had to do with the black arts would not sink in water. Since Dunstan's "magic" consisted merely of greater intelligence than the other young courtiers possessed, nothing could have saved him from drowning, if his tormentors had not had mercy on him.

After this unfortunate experience in the courts of the great, the young Dunstan turned his thoughts more and more seriously to a question that he had often considered before, and in the end he decided to give up the effort to make a public career as one of the king's officers, and to devote his life entirely to the service of the church. He therefore was consecrated as a monk, and returning to Glastonbury soon after, he began his real life's work as a teacher and a reformer. Dunstan did not decide to become a monk except after much hesitation and careful reflection. He thought, for a time, that he might be able to accomplish as much good in the world if he married and took on himself all the other cares of the worldly life, as he could by living the solitary life of the monk. If Dunstan were living to-day and had this matter to decide, no doubt he would conclude that his first opinion was right. But at the time in which he lived, the English were still in need of the forms

and the strict discipline of the monastic way of living. If Dunstan had decided to live the life of the world, he could not have brought about his reforms in teaching and religion, nor could he even have acquired and held the great power in political matters which he was soon to have in his hands.

For some years Dunstan remained at Glastonbury, studying by himself and teaching those who came to be taught. He lived a very peaceful and quiet life, almost the life of a hermit. But if his life was quiet externally, it was very active mentally. Dunstan was always earnest in the endeavor to bring about better order and system in the life of the monasteries with which he was concerned, and since the monks had grown very lax in the course of time, he found plenty to do to persuade them to a stricter mode of life. Besides, Dunstan was interested in many different things, such as music, painting, the copying of manuscripts, and building. He played a great deal on the harp and always carried his harp with him. He was a good workman, too, especially in gold, silver and other metals. The things which he made were usually such as could be used in the church services, for example, bells, cups, plates, candlesticks, organs, and other objects. Throughout his life Dunstan always enjoyed working in his shop, and being by nature of an excitable temperament, such occupation was good for him. Like many men who live a great deal by themselves and who think a great deal, Dunstan imagined he had visions of mysterious things. He thought, for example, that the Devil often appeared

to him in person, and a story that grew up after Dunstan's death told how the Devil appeared one day at the window of Dunstan's shop and how Dunstan seized him by the nose with his pincers and held him until he begged for mercy.

Glastonbury soon became, under Dunstan's direction, a busy and prosperous seat of learning. After a time Dunstan himself was made Abbot of Glastonbury, and then he was able to carry out his plans more fully. The old buildings were repaired and new ones were put up. Many gifts were given to the monastery, and it became one of the finest and richest in England. Large numbers of students came there for instruction, and many pilgrims made the journey to Glastonbury on account of the reputation for holiness which the place acquired. When King Athelstan died, he was buried at Glastonbury, and he is only one of a number of English kings who from the time of Arthur found their last resting place in this abbey.

After the long and successful reign of Athelstan, England was governed by a group of kings whose reigns were short and unhappy. These kings all had names a good deal alike. The first was Edmund, the second was Edred, the third was Edwy, and the fourth and last of this group was Edgar. It was in these unsettled times that Dunstan began to take a larger part in the activities of public life than he had done hitherto. He became a kind of prime minister to King Edred, and, with a few interruptions, he held this position almost to the end of his life. Dunstan

was especially influential in the reign of King Edgar. Although this king was neither a very strong nor a very good man personally, nevertheless, with Dunstan's aid, he governed the country so well that his reign was long remembered as a happy and prosperous one. Dunstan was made Archbishop of Canterbury by Edgar, and he was really the power behind the throne that made Edgar's government effective. During Edgar's reign of sixteen years the English were so little disturbed by wars and other troubles that the king came to be called Edgar the Peaceful. At one time eight kings who had accepted him as their master came to him at Chester to do him homage. These eight kings rowed Edgar on the river Dee from the town of Chester to the minster of St. John outside the walls, and then, after they had offered prayer at the minster, they rowed him back to the town again. No king of England had ever before had such a royal honor paid to him. The story is told that one of these kings, who was a king of Scotland and whose name was Kenneth, was one day at a feast, and he said to his friends, "It is a strange thing that so many kings as we are should all do service to this one man, who is so much smaller than any one of us." Now although Edgar was a small man, he was a brave one. Soon after this, having heard of Kenneth's speech, Edgar took him out into a wood where they were entirely alone, and bringing forth two swords, he gave one to Kenneth and kept one himself. "You have said," began Edgar, "that I am a small man, and that it is strange for a small

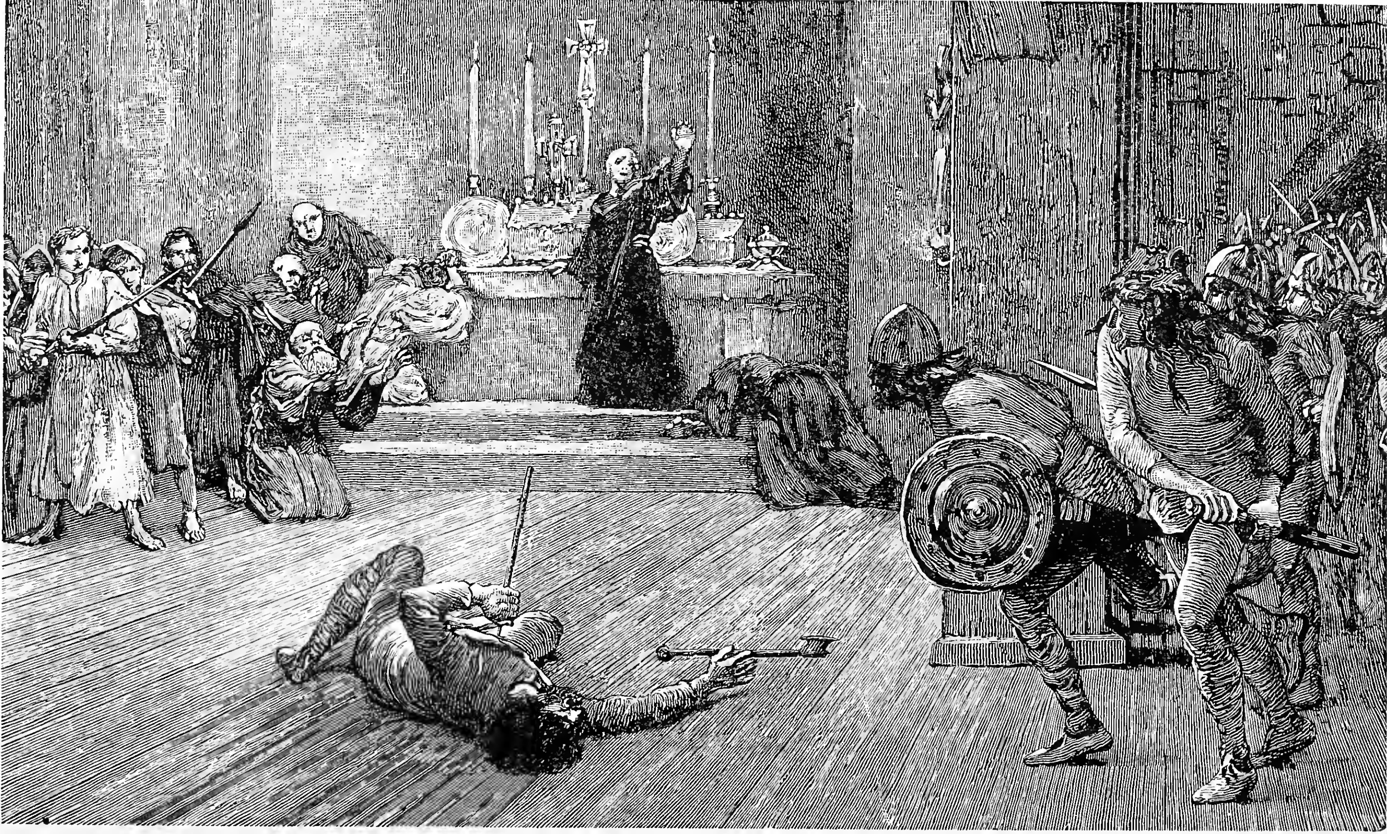
man to rule over big men. Take now your sword, and let us see which of us is the stronger, and let us see if you can use your sword to as good effect as your tongue." Kenneth, however, refused to draw his sword against Edgar, whom he acknowledged as his overlord and king, and falling at Edgar's feet, he asked pardon for what he had said, declaring that his words were not meant in earnest, but merely as a jest. So Edgar and Kenneth parted in peace and were better friends after that than they had been before.

During the time that he was Edgar's prime minister and was Archbishop of Canterbury, Dunstan accomplished a great deal of good in England. He restored many of the old monasteries, and the monks who had become careless and neglectful of their duties he replaced by others who were more serious. England was in danger for a time of falling back into a kind of barbarism, and it was Dunstan who saved it from this danger. The country was now full of heathen and barbarous Danes, most of whom had settled down quietly on their lands; but these Danes were especially in need of instruction and in need of an example of a better kind of life than they were accustomed to, and this instruction and this example were provided by Dunstan and his reformed monasteries. With all his other activities of church and state, however, Dunstan always found time to work in his shop. He seems to have felt that his mind worked best if his hands also had something to do. He consequently encouraged people to take an interest in manufacturing useful and beautiful objects.

In this he showed great wisdom, recognizing that for those who did not want to be monks or scholars, there was something else worth doing besides fighting.

Dunstan was sixty-three years old when he died in the year 988. The last years of his life were spent quietly at Canterbury, where great throngs of people came to listen to his words. But after a period of peace, unhappy times were coming for England again. When Edgar died, he was followed by Athelred as king, who was one of the worst kings the English have ever had. Athelred unwisely tried to get along without Dunstan's counsel, but lacking ability himself, the affairs of the country soon fell into disorder. And now again and for the last time, great armies of Danes began to pour into England under the leadership of the Danish kings Swegen and Cnut. Dunstan happily did not live long enough to see the final conquest of England by these invaders, for he died ten years after Athelred became king.

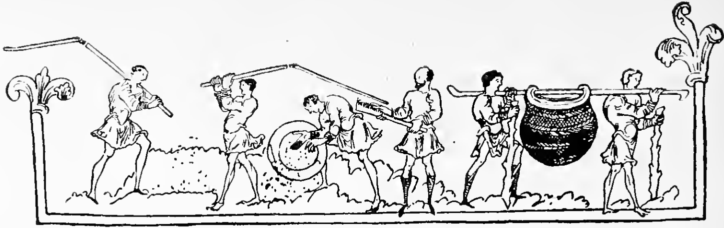
In earlier days when men thought more about the saints than they do to-day, it was customary for each trade or occupation to have its particular patron saint. Thus the patron saint of the shoemakers was St. Crispin, and the patron saint of travelers and wayfaring people was St. James. The patron saint of musicians was St. Cecilia, because Cecilia was believed to have invented the organ, and to have played upon this instrument so sweetly that even the angels came down from heaven to listen to her. And since Dunstan had always been interested in handicrafts



Danes Robbing a Monastery

and was himself a skillful workman, after his death he was often chosen by the goldsmiths and the workers in metal as their patron saint.

Few men have done so many things and done them so well as St. Dunstan. He was a teacher and preacher, and he built and organized many places of religion and learning in England. He was besides a great statesman, directing the policies of the country in an unusually difficult and dangerous period. And finally he was interested not only in the affairs of the great world, but he was broad enough to see that labor well done with the hands also has its dignity and worth.



XII

A LESSON IN LATIN

The school-boy of a thousand years ago probably differed very little from the school-boy of to-day, but the kind of schools he attended and the subjects he studied have changed greatly in the past ten centuries. In the first place, schools in oldest England were almost always held in connection with some church or monastery, and the classes were taught by priests and monks. The pupils who attended the schools generally expected to enter the church in some office or other, because at that time all the learned callings were under the direction of the church. So close was the union between the church and the school in earlier days that the term clerk came to mean almost the same thing as priest, and the word clergyman, which literally should mean nothing more than clerkly man, to this day is applied only to the priest or minister of a church.

Even while the boys were only students in the monastery schools and were still too young to be admitted to any of the formal orders of the church, they were trained to take part in the church services. They sang in the choir, learning the psalms, responses and

hymns, in Latin, of course, since all the service was in Latin, and they performed such other duties as could be intrusted to acolytes and altar-boys. The services of the church were very numerous, being in all seven for each day; the first was matins, at dawn in the morning, and the others occurred at regular intervals until the last, called compline, was reached at nine o'clock, in the evening. To anyone who could not understand Latin these services must often have seemed long and tedious.

But Latin was the one thing which every schoolboy had to study and know a thousand years ago. A knowledge of this language was the universal test by which one could tell a clerk or learned man from the unlearned. The ability to speak Latin had somewhat the value of a college degree nowadays, and it admitted persons who possessed that accomplishment not only to the society of scholars, but also to many special privileges. In those days it was not enough to be able to read Latin, one must also be able to speak it. The advantage in having a speaking knowledge of the language was that if one chanced to be in a foreign country the language of which was unfamiliar, one could always find somebody who could talk in Latin. In many ways this was a great saving, for if one traveled much, no matter how many different countries were visited, it was possible to get along with Latin.

The study of Latin consequently held a very important place in the school life of the boy in these old-time schools. Since this was long before the in-

vention of printing and therefore long before the day of printed books, and since manuscript books were rare and costly, the teaching of all subjects, Latin as well as others, had to be done mainly by speech and conversation. Just how this teaching was done we are able to see very well from one of these conversations, or colloquies, as they were called, which was written down and has been preserved to this day. This Latin colloquy was written by a famous Anglo-Saxon scholar and preacher named Alfric, and it is particularly interesting because it shows what sorts of things boys liked to talk about in those days. The conversation was carried on in Latin as much as possible, but the teacher doubtless stopped often to explain unfamiliar words or phrases in English.

In Alfric's colloquy a group of boys are supposed to come to the teacher with a request that he teach them to speak Latin. The teacher says he is quite willing to do so, and he begins to question the boys, each of whom takes the part of a different character.

TEACHER. What sort of things is it you want to learn to speak about?

BOYS. We don't care what it is, if only we can learn to speak correctly.

TEACHER. Very well, then. But I suppose you won't mind being whipped if you are too slow at your lesson?

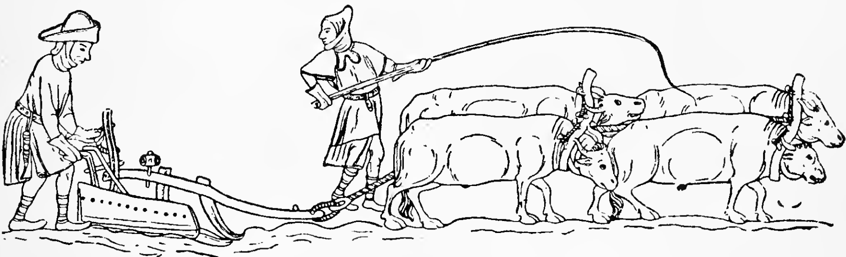
BOYS. We would rather be whipped and know Latin, than not whipped and ignorant of Latin. But we know how kind you are, and that we shan't be punished unless we deserve it.

TEACHER. But I asked you what you want to talk about. What is your occupation?

BOY (*only one answers here*). I expect to be a monk, and I sing every day the seven services, and this keeps me very busy. Between times, however, I want to learn to speak Latin.

TEACHER. What do your companions do?

BOY. Some are plow-boys, some are shepherds, some oxherds, some hunters, some fishers, some fowl-



PLOWING

ers, some merchants, some cobblers, some salt-makers, and some are bakers.

TEACHER. Well, plow-boy, what say you? How do you carry on your work?

PLOW-BOY. O Sir, I work very hard. At sunrise, I drive out my oxen to the fields and yoke them to the plow. No matter how bad the weather is, I can't stay at home, but having yoked my oxen and having fastened on the plow-share and coulter, I must plow every day an acre or more.

TEACHER. Do you have any one with you when you plow?

PLOW-BOY. I have a boy who drives the oxen

with a goad and who is very hoarse on account of the cold and the way he shouts at the oxen.

TEACHER. Do you do anything else?

PLOW-BOY. Yes, indeed, I do. I have to fill the mangers with hay, and water my oxen and clean out their stalls.

TEACHER. That seems like a good deal of work.

PLOW-BOY. Yes, sir, I have to work very hard because I'm not free.*

TEACHER. What say you, shepherd? Do you work, too?

SHEPHERD. O yes, sir. Early in the morning I drive my sheep to the pastures, and there I watch them with my dogs, in cold weather or hot, so that the wolves do not carry them off. Then I drive them to their pens, and I milk them twice a day, and I make cheese and butter. I do my master's work very faithfully, Sir.

TEACHER. Well, oxherd, what do you do?

OXHERD. I work very, very hard. When the plow-boy unyokes his oxen I drive them to the pasture and I watch them all night so as to protect them from thieves. And then early in the morning I take them, well fed and watered, to the plow-boy again.

TEACHER. Is that lad there one of your companions?

BOY (*probably the head boy*). Yes, sir, he is.

TEACHER. Is there anything you can do?

BOY (*to whom teacher has spoken*). Yes, sir, I have a trade.

*Slaves and bond-servants were still kept as late as the time of Alfric.

TEACHER. What is it?

BOY. I am a hunter.

TEACHER. Whose hunter are you?

HUNTER. The king's, sir.

TEACHER. How do you carry on your trade?

HUNTER. I braid nets and afterwards I set my nets in a good place. Then I take my dogs and they drive the wild animals into the nets, and so I kill them.

TEACHER. Can't you hunt without nets?

HUNTER. Yes, I can hunt without nets.

TEACHER. How?

HUNTER. I can run wild animals down with swift dogs.

TEACHER. What animals do you usually catch?

HUNTER. I catch stags and boars, and does and roes, and sometimes hares.

TEACHER. Did you go hunting to-day?

HUNTER. No, sir, not to-day, because to-day is Sunday, but I went yesterday.

TEACHER. What did you get?

HUNTER. I got two stags and one wild boar.

TEACHER. How did you catch them?

HUNTER. I took the stags in a net, but I killed the wild boar.

TEACHER. I should think you would be afraid to attack a wild boar.

HUNTER. My dogs drove him toward me, and when he came near, I rushed out and pierced him with my boar spear.

TEACHER. That was very brave.

Hunter. It won't do for a hunter to be timid, because there are a great many fierce animals in the forest.

Teacher. What do you do with your game?

Hunter. I give everything I take to the King, because I am his hunter.

Teacher. What does the King give you?

Hunter. He gives me clothing and food, and sometimes he gives me a horse or an arm-ring to encourage me in my work.

Hunting seems to have been a favorite subject of conversation, as the colloquy on this theme is a good deal longer than any of the rest. However, the fisherman, whose turn is next, comes in for a good share.

Teacher. What is your business?

Fisher. I am a fisherman.

Teacher. What do you make out of your trade?

Fisher. I make my food and clothing and money besides.

Teacher. How do you catch your fish?

Fisher. I go out in a boat and set my nets in the river, and I throw out hooks and baskets,* and I take whatever they catch.

Teacher. What do you do if you catch some fish that aren't good to eat?

Fisher. I throw those away and take only the good ones.

Teacher. Where do you sell your fish?

Fisher. In the town.

*Apparently traps in the shape of baskets.

TEACHER. Who buys them?

FISHER. The people of the town. I could sell more than I can catch.

TEACHER. What kind of fish do you catch?

FISHER. Eels and pike and minnows and eel-pouts and lampreys, and every kind that swims in water.

TEACHER. Why don't you fish in the ocean?

FISHER. Sometimes I do, but not very often, because it is a long voyage to the ocean.

TEACHER. What kind of fish do you catch in the ocean?

FISHER. Herring and salmon and porpoises and sturgeons, and oysters and crabs and mussels and periwinkles and cockles and flounders and sole and lobsters, and many others like these.

TEACHER. Wouldn't you like to catch a whale?

FISHER. Not I!

TEACHER. Why not?

FISHER. Because it is a risky thing to catch a whale. It's safer to go fishing in the river in my own boat, than to go whale-hunting with many boats.

TEACHER. How is that?

FISHER. I would rather catch a fish that I can kill than one which, with one stroke, could kill not only me but all my companions.

TEACHER. And yet many people catch whales and aren't killed, and they make a great deal of money out of them.

FISHER. That's true enough, but I can't do it because I'm too much afraid.

After the fisherman comes the fowler, who tells how he hunts with hawks, and how he lets his tame hawks fly away in the summer time after the hunting season is over, because he does not want to feed them all summer. Then when the hunting begins again, he goes to the forests and catches wild hawks and trains them to hunt. The teacher says he thinks it would be easier to keep the tame hawks over summer; but the fowler says he can catch as many hawks as he wants. After the fowler, the teacher questions the merchant.

TEACHER. What things do you import for us?

MERCHANT. Purple cloth, silk, precious gems, gold, different kinds of garments, spices, wines and oil, ivory, brass, bronze, tin, sulphur, glass, and many other things like these.

TEACHER. Do you sell your goods here for the same price you paid for them?

MERCHANT. That I do not. If I did, what should I make out of it? I sell my goods for more than I pay for them, so that I may have some profit and means with which to care for my wife and my son.

After this the cobbler, the salt-maker, the baker and the cook engage in a dispute as to which of these trades is the most important, each, naturally, standing up for his own. As they appear to have difficulty in settling the question, the teacher asks if there is any wise man among the students, and when one of the boys takes the part of a wise man, the teacher asks him which of all men's occupations is the most

important. The wise man answers, the service of God. "And which," continues the teacher, "is the most important of all worldly occupations?" "Farming," answers the wise man, "because the farmer feeds us all."

BLACKSMITH SAYS: I'd like to know how the farmer could get his plowshare or coulter without my help, since without me he can't make even a goad. And where would the fisherman get his hooks, and the cobbler his awl, and the tailor his needle? Aren't they all my work?

WISE MAN ANSWERS: What you say is quite true, yet nevertheless we would all rather live with the farmer than with you. For the farmer gives us meat and drink, but you, what do you give us in your smithy, except iron fire-sparks, and the noise of sledge hammers and blowing bellows?

CARPENTER SAYS: Who is it that doesn't need my trade? I make houses and ships and all kinds of vessels for everybody.

BLACKSMITH ANSWERS: Well now, carpenter, how can you talk in that fashion, when you know you couldn't bore a single hole if it weren't for my trade?

WISE MAN SAYS: Now let us stop this quarreling and let there be peace among us. And let each trade help the other and let none of us quarrel with the farmer, from whom we get food for ourselves and fodder for our horses. And this is my advice to all good workmen, that each one busy himself in his own trade, for no trade will take care of a man who doesn't take care of his trade. Whatever you are,

then, whether you are a priest or a monk or a citizen or a soldier, attend to your own affairs. Be what you are, for it is a shame and a disgrace for a man not to want to be what he is and ought to be.

The colloquy does not continue in this serious vein, however, and the teacher soon turns to one of the boys and asks him what he has done that day. The boy answers that he has done many things, having sung in all the services of the church except the one which was still to come.

TEACHER. When will you sing vespers or compline?

BOY. As soon as the time comes.

TEACHER. Were you whipped to-day?

BOY. I wasn't, because I behaved very well to-day.

TEACHER. And how about your companions?

BOY. Why do you ask me that? You know I mustn't tell any of our secrets. If any one of us was whipped I suppose he knows it.

TEACHER. What do you eat?

BOY. I still eat meat, because I am a boy and not a full-fledged monk.

TEACHER. What else do you eat?

BOY. Vegetables and eggs, fish and cheese, butter, beans, and everything that's good to eat.

TEACHER. You must be a great eater if you eat everything that's set before you.

BOY. I'm not such a great eater that I eat all kinds of foods at one meal.

TEACHER. How is that?

Boy. Sometimes I eat this food and sometimes that, but always with moderation as it becomes a monk, not greedily, because I am not a glutton.

Teacher. And what do you drink?

Boy. Ale, if I have it, or water, if I can't get ale.

Teacher. Don't you drink wine?

Boy. I am not rich enough to buy wine, and wine is not a drink for boys or foolish people, but only for old men and wise ones.

Teacher. Where do you sleep?

Boy. In the dormitory with the brethren.

Teacher. Who wakens you in the morning?

Boy. Sometimes I hear the bell and get up myself, but sometimes my master wakens me with a stick.

After this the colloquy closes with a little speech by the teacher to his pupils, in which he exhorts them to attend to their duties diligently and always to behave themselves properly. Probably the boys found the Latin of this last speech hard to understand, or at any rate, to put into practice. But if they had learned enough Latin to converse on all the other topics contained in the colloquy, it must be acknowledged that they were all on the way to becoming scholars and clerks.

XIII

THE TWO HAROLDS

One of these two Harolds was King Harold of England, the son of Earl Godwin and the last English king before the coming of William the Conqueror. Harold was king less than a year, but in that short time he won a great victory and met with a great defeat. The great victory, about which this story is to tell, was won when Harold of England overcame the other Harold, the son of Sigurd, king of the Northmen, at the battle of Stamfordbridge in Northumberland.

Now King Harold of England became king of the English not by right of birth but by the free choice of the English people. For Harold was only the son of Godwin, the earl of the West Saxons, and though Godwin was a very powerful earl, he was not of the ancient royal family of England. Nevertheless, when King Edward the Confessor died, there seemed to be no one of the royal family fit to be chosen king after him, and so the people determined to do as the English people had often done before, to make a

king from among their own great men to lead and direct them in peace or battle. No one seemed so well able to govern the country as Harold, the son of Godwin, and with the full consent of the people, Harold was chosen to be their sovereign.

All might have gone well with the new king and his people if it had not been for the interference of

ARCHERS ON FOOT

Harold's rebellious and jealous brother Tostig. At various times Tostig had managed to create a disturbance, and at last, by his harsh and cruel behavior, he made himself so unpopular with the Northumbrians, over whom he was appointed as earl, that they rose up against him and drove him out of the town of York, which was their capital city. Then Tostig came with his troubles to Harold, his brother, and asked Harold to help him regain his lost earldom and

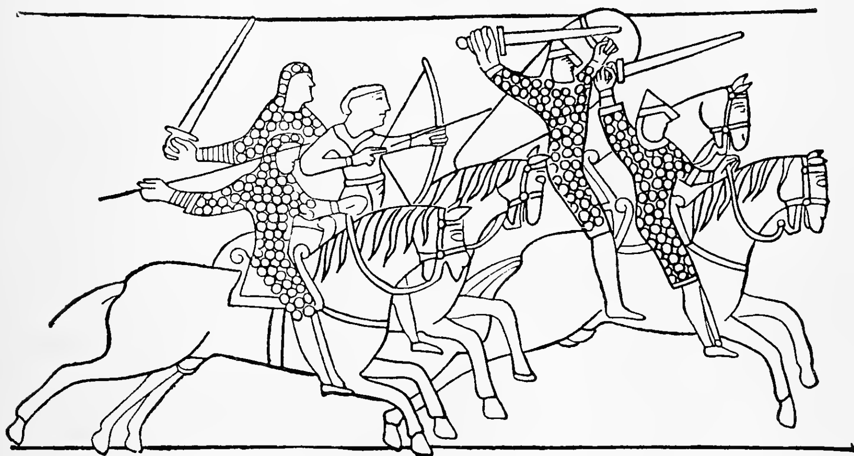
to punish the Northumbrians. But Harold was a just ruler, and when he had heard both sides of the story, he decided that the haughty Tostig deserved the treatment he had received, and he therefore refused to help him avenge himself on his former subjects. So, for one reason and another, Tostig cherished his grievances and finally decided to rebel against the authority of his brother, King Harold, and see what he could win for himself by the might of his own sword.

Tostig busied himself in airing his wrongs, as he called them, and managed to get together a certain number of followers who were willing to support him. But they were far too few to risk an open fight with the whole English army, and Tostig then determined that he must seek for help outside of England. His thoughts first turned to Denmark, where Swegen was then king, and thither he first sailed with a shipload of his retainers.

Now this Swegen was the nephew of the great Danish king Cnut, who had once held both the Danish and English thrones for many years. And Tostig now told Swegen that this was his opportunity to win back the power over the English which his uncle had held, and that he would help him to do it. To all these plans of Tostig, Swegen listened patiently; but when Tostig had finished, Swegen replied, "Cnut was a great man, and I am a little man. Cnut won Norway without striking a blow, but I have all I can do to keep Denmark from falling into the hands of the Northmen." When Tostig heard this, he was

greatly disappointed, and said that if Swegen would not help him, he would go for help where Swegen little supposed he would go.

Now, by this answer Tostig meant that he would go to King Harold of Norway, who was Swegen's greatest enemy. Harold of Norway was the son of Sigurd, and he was one of the bravest warriors of his day. He was a bold and handsome man, and his hair



NORMAN MOUNTED SOLDIERS

and beard were yellow. He was taller by a great deal than most men, and his hands and his feet were large but very well shaped. One of his eyebrows was a little higher than the other. He was a stirring and ambitious man and had fought in the army of the Emperor at Constantinople and had even journeyed as far as Jerusalem. To this famous sea-king Tostig now went with his plan for conquering England, and Harold, eager to win plunder and glory, lent him a willing ear. Tostig's plot seemed a good one to

Harold, and the two conspirators soon came to terms. Word was straightway sent out and a great army of Northmen was collected to go with Harold to England. The Northmen, however, were not all confident of victory. One of them, named Thord, had a dream or vision in which he saw the English army advancing against the Northmen, and at the head of the English came a huge witch-wife riding on a wolf which continually devoured great numbers of dead bodies which the witch-wife fed to it. King Harold of Norway himself had a dream which boded little good for him, but he was too resolute and bold a man to be turned aside by dreams, and when his army was ready, he set sail for England.

As soon as they had landed, the army of Harold of Norway and the rebellious Tostig plundered here and there along the coast, until they were met by the English forces under the command of two English earls. A battle was fought and for a while it looked as though the English would be victorious; but just in time King Harold of Norway appeared in the midst of the fighting, bearing his banner, which he called the Landwaster, and he and his men fought so valiantly that they turned the tide in favor of the Northmen. A great many Englishmen were slain in this battle, and even more were drowned in the river Ouse, on the banks of which stream the fighting took place. Being now without any defence, the town of York submitted to Harold of Norway, and Tostig was thus, as he supposed, avenged on the people who had driven him out of this same town some

time before. The day on which the town of York thus surrendered to Harold of Norway was Sunday, and after the English had accepted Harold as their king and had given promises to help him fight against Harold of England, the Northmen all went back to their ships, intending to return to York in the morning and hold a great meeting in the town in order to take formal possession of it.

In the meantime, however, word had come to Harold of England that the Northmen had landed in Northumberland, and gathering his army together, he traveled as fast as he could from London toward York. He reached the town on the evening of this same Sunday on which it had surrendered, but after Harold of Norway had gone back to his ships. The English of York were overjoyed to have Harold, the king of the English, with them, and they received him and his army into the town and set watches all about so that no word of the arrival of the English should be carried to the Northmen.

The next morning Harold of Norway prepared to go back and take possession of the town. One third of his army he left behind to guard the ships, and with the rest he and Tostig set out. It was a warm day of summer, and not expecting any serious fighting, the Northmen left behind their heavy mail and armor, and carried with them only their helmets, swords and shields. Now, as they marched along in high good humor and as they drew near to the town, they saw ahead of them a cloud of dust, as though an army of men and of horses was approaching, and

soon, too, they saw the glitter of spears and of armor. "Do you know," said Harold of Norway to Tostig, "what this throng is coming toward us?" "Not surely," answered Tostig, speaking truly; "it may be the host of the English, or it may be some of my friends and kinsmen who have come to do honor to you." By this time the English had come still nearer, and it could be seen that they were a very great army, and their weapons glittered in the sun like ice-splinters. Harold of Norway then felt sure that this was the army of the English, and he halted his men in order to take counsel. Tostig cautiously advised that they should go back to their ships and get their armor, or, better still, go into the ships and defend themselves from there, for then the English would be at a disadvantage. "Rather let us stay here," exclaimed Harold of Norway, who was eager for a fight, "and let us send back three men on swift horses to call up the rest of our army. These English shall see some hard hand-play before we are done with them."

To this plan Tostig must agree because Harold was his master. Then Harold of Norway arranged his men for the battle. He set up his banner called the Landwaster, and he formed his men in a hollow circle around it. The men were so placed that their shields interlocked and made a shield-wall with no opening in it. Then Harold of Norway directed his men that they should set their spears in the ground, and that the first row of men in the shield-wall should point their spears so that they would strike the breasts

of the men, and the second row in the shield-wall should set their spears so that they would strike the breasts of the horses, when the English rode against them. When this was done Harold of Norway rode around his host to see that all was in order. It was a black horse on which he rode, and as he went here and there, the horse stumbled and Harold was thrown to the ground. "There's good luck in a fall for a traveler," he exclaimed as he sprang to his feet. Now the English were near enough by this time to see all that was happening, and when Harold of England was told that the man who had fallen was his enemy of Norway, he saw in the accident a less happy omen for the Northmen.

Then out from the band of the English there rode twenty horsemen, and men and horses were all well covered with armor. As they drew near to the shield-wall of the Northmen, one of the Englishmen spoke and said, "Is Earl Tostig, son of Godwin, here in this army?" "No one can say," answered Tostig, "that he is not here." Then the other spoke to Tostig and said, "Harold of England greets Tostig his brother, and says that he shall have all Northumberland as he had it aforetime. More than this, he shall have one third of the realm of England to rule over, rather than there should be enmity between brother and brother." "The words of Harold are fairer," answered Tostig, "than they were when I spoke to him last winter, for then he had nothing but spite and scorn for me. But this also I would know. If I listen to Harold of England and make peace with

him, what will Harold of England have to offer to King Harold of Norway?" "Seven feet of English soil," answered the horseman, "or as much more as he needs, being taller than other men." "Take this answer then to Harold of England," said Tostig, "that never will it be said that Tostig was untrue to his word to Harold of Norway. Here we will die like men, or like men we will win England by fighting." With no more words, the twenty horsemen rode back to the English army, and when they were gone, Harold of Norway said to Earl Tostig, "Who was that man who spoke so fairly to you?" "That man," said Tostig, "was Harold, my brother, the son of Godwin and king of the English." Then Harold of Norway was angry that Tostig had not told him this sooner, for he thought they might easily have destroyed Harold of England when he was so near to them. But Tostig answered that though it was rash in so great a man as Harold of England thus to risk himself, he had no wish to be a betrayer of his brother. "If one of us must fall at the hands of the other," said Tostig, "I would rather Harold were the death of Tostig than Tostig the death of Harold." Then Harold of Norway turned aside to his own men and said, "This Harold of the English is not a tall man, yet he sat well in his stirrups."

Thereupon the battle began in deadly earnest. King Harold of Norway put on his coat of mail, the name of which was Emma, and with the Landwaster in their midst, the Northmen were ready for the attack. The English on their part rode up against the

line of the Northmen, but so firm and solid was the shield-wall that every time they were driven back by the bristling ranks of Norwegian spears. After they had made a number of onsets in this fashion, the attacks of the English became less vigorous and determined, and thus the Northmen were led to make a fatal mistake. For they supposed that the English were too weak to continue the fight, and when they saw their enemies falling back, they broke their shield-wall and followed after to attack them. The English at once seized their opportunity and pressing in among the Northmen from all sides they cut them down to right and left, and slew many with their spears and bows and arrows. King Harold of Norway had taken his stand in the center of his army beside the Landwaster, but when he saw that the shield-wall was broken, he knew that it was time for him to take part in the fight. He hurried to the place where the throng was thickest and laid on so mightily with his two-handed sword, that the English were on the point of retreating. But just then an English bowman let fly an arrow which struck King Harold of Norway in the throat, and that was the death wound of the leader of the Norwegian army. Now that Harold of Norway was slain, the fighting stopped for a time, and Harold of England again offered Tostig peace if he would yield to him. But not one of the side of the Northmen would accept Harold's peace, and they all said, "Rather than quarter at the hands of the English, we will all die here, one beside the other." Then Tostig took Harold of

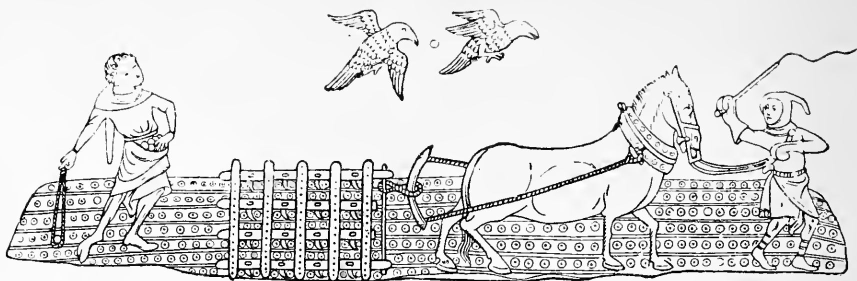
Norway's place beside the Landwaster, and the fighting continued until both Tostig and a great part of the Northmen lay dead upon the field of battle.

But not yet had the English won the victory. For the rest of the Northmen whom Harold had left behind to guard the ships, and whom he had sent for when he saw the English host approaching, now came up, all fitted out in full armor. These Northmen were led by Orre Eystein, a very bold warrior, and now the fiercest fighting of all began. This is called Orre Eystein's Charge, and though Orre and his men were all out of breath from the haste with which they had come to the field of battle, they fought with the fury of madmen. When they saw that the day was going against them, they fought all the more savagely, and finally they threw away their coats of mail and their shields, so that they might have nothing but their spears and swords to manage. For a long time Orre and his men defended the Landwaster; but the English were too many and too well armed for them, and as the evening drew on, Orre and many more of the chief men of the Northmen, as well as the greater part of their army, had taken their places beside Harold and Tostig among the heaps of the slain on the field of battle. Then the few of them that were still living saved themselves by flight and left Harold of England master of the field and victorious.

One of the Northmen who escaped was Harold of Norway's marshal, and Styrkar was his name. He fled away on horseback with nothing but his sword and his helmet and his shirt upon his back. Now as

the night came on, the wind began to blow cold, and Styrkar, after the heat of the battle, felt keenly the chill of it. As he rode along he met an English peasant who was wearing a coat made of skins with the fur on the inside. "Will you sell me your coat?" said Styrkar to the peasant. "No, I will not sell you my coat," answered the peasant, "for I know by your voice that you are a Northman." Then when Styrkar asked the peasant what he would do about it, the peasant replied that if he had a sword, he would do his best to slay Styrkar. "Well," answered Styrkar, "if you have no sword, I have one," and with that he set upon the peasant and slew him, and putting on the fur coat, he rode forth at least in comfort if not in safety.

This is the story of how Harold of England won the great fight with the Northmen under Harold of Norway and Tostig at Stamfordbridge, on the twenty-fifth day of September in the year one thousand and sixty-six. It was a great victory, but Harold had but short time to enjoy it; for four days later William of Normandy with his French army landed on the southern coast of England, and the fate which had befallen Harold of Norway at Stamfordbridge overtook Harold of England at the still more famous battle of Hastings.



XIV

THE END OF OLDEST ENGLAND

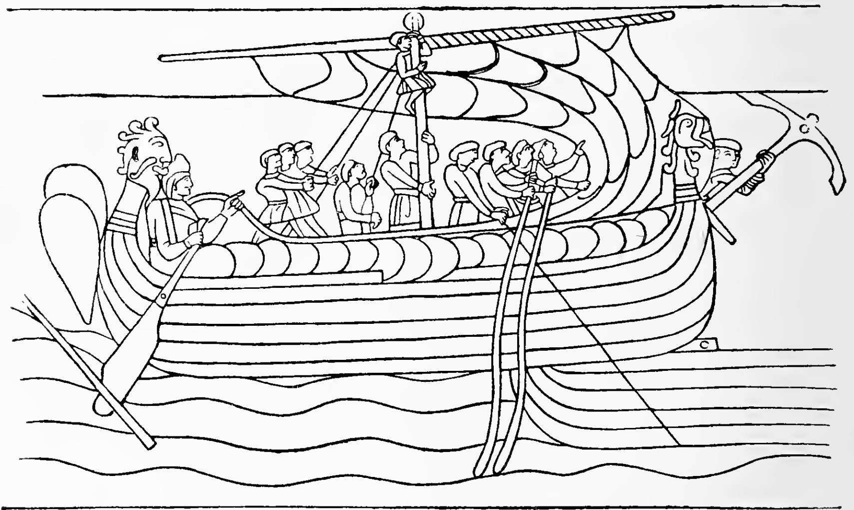
King Harold of England was resting in the town of York after his great fight at Stamfordbridge. He had met the Northmen under their leaders Harold of Norway and the rebellious Tostig, and he had won such a victory over them that the news of it, carried back to Norway by the survivors of the battle, must prevent the troublesome Northmen from soon undertaking the conquest of England again. The English might well suppose that now they could look forward to a time of peace for their country, a peace that was as much needed as it was wished for.

But peace was not yet to be, nor was Harold, the last of the kings of oldest England, to reap the fruits of his victory over the Northmen. For suddenly there appeared in the town of York a horseman, travel-stained and weary. He had ridden as fast as his horse could carry him from London, and the news he brought was that, four days after the fight at Stamfordbridge, William of Normandy had landed with a French army on the southern coast of

England. "Had I been there," said Harold, "he should not have landed so easily."

Now this William, duke of Normandy, who was soon to become the Conqueror of England, maintained that he was the rightful king of England. He declared that King Edward the Good before his death promised that William should be king after him, and he also declared that Harold himself, when he was in Normandy some years before, had sworn allegiance to William and had promised to be his man when William should become king. William had various other reasons to show that he was the rightful king of the English, but how much force or truth there was in them, or whether there was any truth in them, it is very hard at this day to say. It is quite certain, however, that William was an ambitious man, and that he was anxious to make even a poor excuse serve in a bad cause. For no matter what Edward had said or Harold had promised, according to English law there was only one way by which an English king could be chosen, and that was by the free election of the chief men of the English people. It was in this way that Harold had been made king, and he rightly felt that it was his duty to defend England and his own office of king as powerfully as he was able. Gathering his forces together again, he immediately turned his face southward and hastened to meet these new invaders of his kingdom. He stayed a few days in London, collecting as many troops as he could get together, and then he crossed the Thames to face the Norman army.

The place where Duke William had landed was on the coast of Sussex, at the little town of Pevensey, and as there was no one there to prevent him, he landed his troops without any interference. As William himself leaped from his boat to the shore, he stumbled and fell, but quickly sprang up again with his hands full of earth. "A good omen, Lord Duke," cried one of his men, "for now already you have the



A NORMAN SHIP

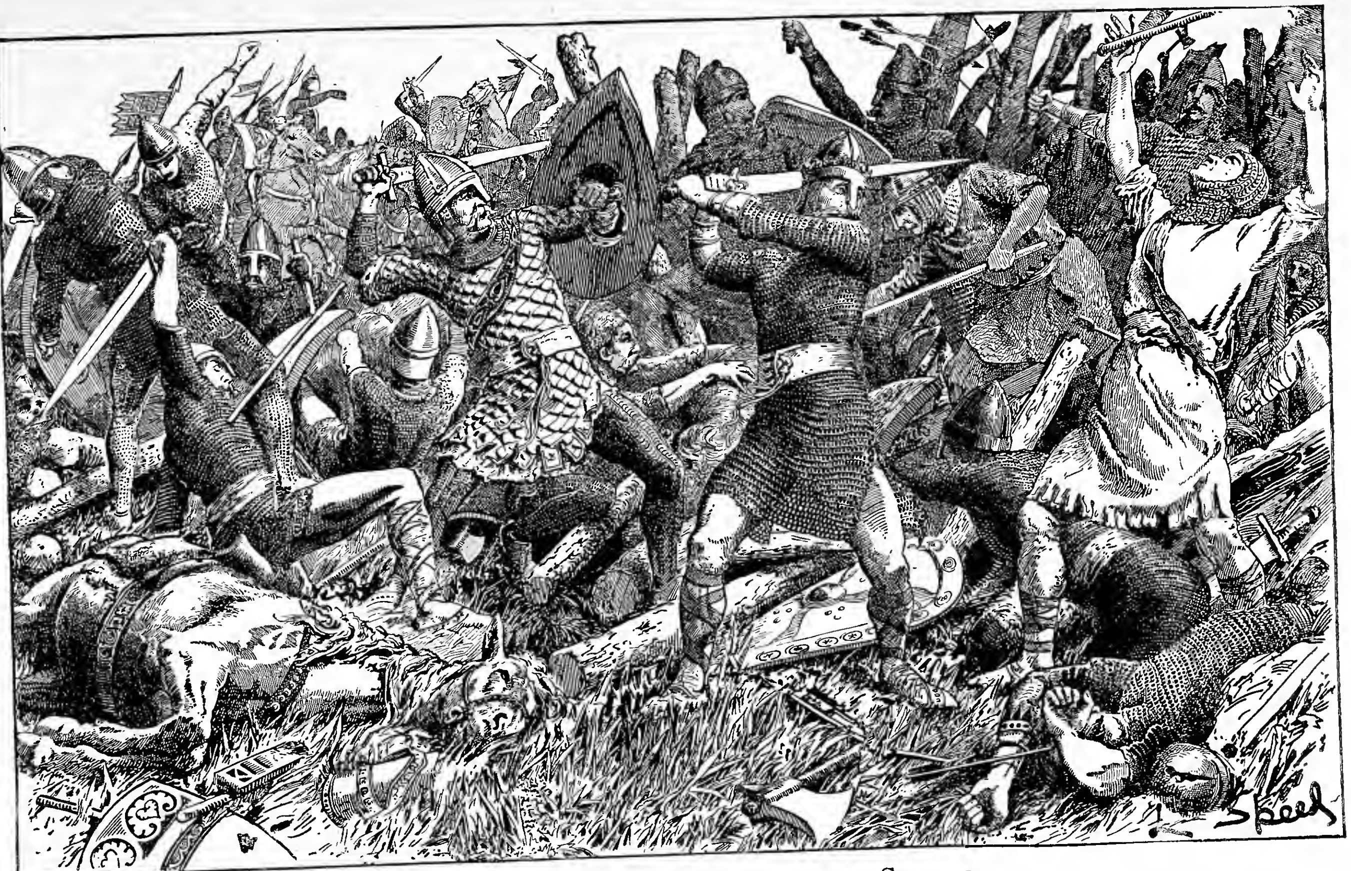
land of the English in your hands." But good omen or bad omen, William of Normandy was not to win the land of the English without striking many a hard blow for it. After the landing at Pevensey, William marched on a short distance and entrenched himself on a hill called Hastings, and King Harold, after he had gathered his army, marched south from London and pitched his camp on another hill near by, which was called Senlac. And so from the names of

these two camps, the battle which was soon to be fought here is sometimes called the Battle of Hastings, and sometimes the Battle of Senlac.

It was the fourteenth day of October in the year ten hundred and sixty-six, when the two armies stood face to face and ready for the battle. The Normans were a mighty host, both of foot-soldiers and of horsemen, and all of them were furnished with armor and weapons of the very best kind. But of all the French troops, none did better service on this day, as we shall see, than the famous archers of Louviers and Evreux, though the others, too, were not lacking in deeds of valor. The army was arranged in three divisions, and at the center rode Duke William with the flower of Norman chivalry about him. "Never," said the Viscount of Thouars, when William had mounted his horse, "never was such another knight seen under heaven, and the noble count shall to-day become a nobler king." The steed that William the Conqueror rode on was meet for such a master, for it was a gift to him from King Alfonso of Galicia, in Spain. And by the side of William there rode many another only less worthy than he. There was Odo, his brother, bishop of Bayeux, and Geoffrey, the bishop of Coutances, and not far away, Robert of Mortain, a third brother of William and Odo. But William and Odo rode side by side, and each bore in his hand as his only weapon a heavy mace. Near them rode Toustain the White, bearing the sacred banner which Pope Alexander of Rome had given to William to bless his cause, and round about these in the center, glit-

tered the hosts of armored Frenchmen as far as the eye could see. Then Duke William heard mass and received communion before entering the battle, and the bishops gave their blessing to all the men of the French army. And William made a vow that if the victory were given to him, he would build a holy minster on the very spot where the standard of King Harold was now waving; and so in after times he did build there the Abbey of St. Martin of the Place of Battle.

On the other hill of Senlac were ranged the forces of Harold, fewer and less brilliant in their panoply of war than the Frenchmen, but no less stout of heart. Unlike the Normans, the English were all on foot, for it was not the manner of the English at this time to fight on horseback. Nor was it the English manner to fight with bows and arrows, but with spears and swords, and, most terrible of all, with the mighty two-handed axes which they had learned how to use from the Danes and Northmen. Shields and coats of mail and helmets were the defense of the English, but many of them unhappily had neither mail to protect them nor weapons fit to oppose the armor of their enemies. In the center of the English stood Harold, the King, and by his side were his two brothers, the valiant Gyrth and the bold Leofwine. Nor were priests and men of religion lacking in Harold's army any more than in William's; for there were Alfwig, abbot of Winchester, and Leofric, the abbot of Peterborough, and many another whose monk's gown was covered with a coat of mail. In the center of the



Normans and English Fighting at Senlac

English host, where King Harold stood, rose up the Dragon of Wessex, the famous banner of the English which many a time had led them to victory against the Danes and Northmen; and by its side stood the Standard of King Harold, with its device of the fighting warrior all wrought in gold on a glittering fabric. Thus the English stood, surrounding their heroic king and waiting for the onset of the Normans.

Now before the fighting began, the two leaders, William of Normandy and King Harold of England, each made a speech to his soldiers. Duke William told his men that he had come to England only to obtain what was rightly his, that Harold of England had broken his word to him and that therefore he must be punished. He said also that the Normans were much better soldiers than the English, for the English had never done well in battle, and time and again they had been defeated by the Danes, who had once even taken their land from them. Many other charges he made against the English, and he ended by saying that he had come to avenge the many wrongs the English had done; and that God would help him and his army in their righteous cause. Perhaps William believed everything he said, but whether he did or not his speech had the effect of raising even higher the spirit of the already excited Normans. Much more modest and simple, on the other hand, was the speech of King Harold. William of Normandy had come over to England, he told his men, to conquer them if he could, but if they held to

the defensive, firm and resolute, they had nothing to fear. The Norman soldiers, especially the Norman horsemen, were courageous and terrible fighters, and if they once got into the midst of the English ranks, there would be little hope for them. Then Harold pointed out to his men that the most important thing of all was that there should be no break in their shield-wall, that the Normans must never be allowed to make any opening through which they could ride to the hill on which the English were entrenched. Their only hope, said Harold, was in keeping an unbroken shield-wall, in standing firm in their position and in cutting down every man who approached their front. If they did this, he told them, they might be sure the victory would be won.

It was about nine o'clock on Saturday morning, when the Normans began to move from their entrenchments on Hastings to attack the English line. In front came the heavy armed foot-soldiers and the archers, and last of all came the horsemen. The archers let fly a shower of arrows, but they did little harm, being caught in the English shields, and the French host drew nearer. Now there was in the French army a warrior whose name was Taillefer, and he was also a minstrel or singer of songs. Taillefer begged this boon of William, that he might be allowed to strike the first blow, hand to hand, and William granting his request, the minstrel rode out alone in front of the Norman army, throwing his sword up in the air and catching it again and singing the old hero songs of Charlemagne and Roland.

Taillefer did strike the first blow, and so brave was he and so strong of arm that two of the English were slain before he was beaten down by the English axes. And then the main body of the French pressed forward and the battle began in earnest.

The French foot-soldiers were in front of the horse, and it was William's plan that the foot-soldiers should make a breach in the English shield-wall, through which his horsemen could ride and thus easily overrun the English. But the foot-soldiers were unable to break down the wall of shields at any point. They made attack after attack, shouting their battle cry, "God aid us," but each time when they drew near to the English front they were cut down by the huge axes in the hands of the English, who answered with their cry, some shouting, "God the Almighty," and others, "Holy Cross." Even with the French horsemen to support them, the foot-soldiers were unable to approach the English line or to make any headway up the hill where floated the golden Dragon and the Standard. The English stood there, literally like a wall, dealing out death to all that drew near. At length the courage of the French began to give way, and one division of them, panic-stricken, turned back in flight. The confusion soon spread to the rest of the French troops, and even the Normans in the center, where rode William and Odo and other great captains, were drawn into retreat. For a moment it looked as though the rout of the French would be complete, and the cry arose that William himself was slain. But, hearing this cry, William took off his

helmet and, showing his face to the frightened army, he shouted to encourage them, "I live and by grace of God will conquer." The main body of the English, on the other side, still kept the defensive, firm and immovable, as Harold had commanded them. But some of the English troops at a distance from the King, seeing the French, as they thought, in full retreat, could not resist the temptation to go in pursuit of them. They paid dearly for their disobedience, for William quickly rallied his men, and his horsemen rode down upon the pursuing English and cut them down on all sides.

The French now returned to the attack with renewed courage. The center of the French army under the three brothers, William, Odo and Robert, sought out the center of the English army where the three English brothers Harold and Gyrth and Leofwine were grouped about the Standard. William rode forward and tried hard to come face to face with Harold where he stood in the thickest of the fight. In this he almost succeeded, but the watchful Gyrth, who was fighting near his brother, saw William in time and hurled his spear at him. The spear missed the rider but it struck the horse which bore him, the noble steed given to William by King Alfonso of Spain, and it fell dead to the ground. Twice again on this day of battle William's horse was killed beneath him, but the great leader himself seemed charmed against all the weapons that were hurled at him. Having lost his horse, William continued the attack on foot, and now he pressed so far forward

that he came face to face with Gyrth, whose spear had almost made an end of him, and in the fight that took place between them, he struck Gyrth down with the great iron mace that he bore in his hands. Thus perished one of the bravest of the English and one of the first of those to fall who stood about Harold's Standard. Another to fall soon after was Leofwine, and of the three English brothers, now only Harold the King was left to lead and encourage the English army. But still the English held bravely together. Where one fell in the shield-wall, the others pressed closer together and left no gap for the entrance of the Normans. The living rampart still stood firm and solid about the King, and William saw clearly that his men could never break through it and that they would simply destroy themselves by dashing up against it.

Then it was that William planned to bring about by cunning what he could not accomplish by force. He had observed how a part of the English had left their places a short time before when the French had fallen back after the first attack, and now he sent word throughout the French host that they should turn and pretend to be in full flight, but should be ready to take up the attack if the English left their defensive position. The plan worked well, for a large part of the English, seeing the French in full retreat, and supposing the battle to be over, broke away from the shield-wall and set off in pursuit. What had happened before happened now again. For the French beheld the English scattered over the

field; they rode back among them and soon those of the English who had left the ranks were themselves in flight, not pretended but in deadly earnest. This gave William his first great advantage, for now the hill on which the English had taken their position was unprotected on many sides and the French were able to ride up to the very center of the English army. It was about this center that the fighting from now on took place, for here were grouped King Harold and the pick of the English army. These men had been true to their orders, and here they still kept their shield-wall opposed to the enemy. But though the advantage was now on William's side, the victory was not yet by any means won. To an English leader and his men, there were only two ends to a battle, and one was victory and the other death. No quarter was asked for and none was offered. It was to be a fight to the finish, and William realized that the hardest part of his battle was still before him. At nine in the morning the fighting had begun, and now at twilight the English center was still unconquered, and the Dragon and the Standard still held their places on Senlac. Soon it would be dark, and with a night of rest for the English to recover in, William saw that he would have to undertake the attack again in the morning with a discouraged army and with much less chance of success. But now for the second time on this day, William's wit helped him and brought him the final victory. For seeing that he would be unable to break through the English center, he commanded his archers to fall back and

instead of spending their arrows against the English shield-wall, where they did little damage, he ordered them to shoot up into the air, so that the arrows would fall from above on the heads of the English. Down this terrible shower came, bearing with it death and destruction. If the English protected their heads with their shields, they could not defend their bodies and could not wield their heavy axes. If they protected their bodies, they were exposed to the merciless rain of arrows that pierced them before they could see them. Against this kind of fighting, the shield-wall was defenceless, and what William could not accomplish in open battle he accomplished by this crafty use of his bowmen. One fatal arrow did more mischief than all the rest. It fell like a bolt from heaven, and entering the right eye of King Harold, it pierced him to the center of life. The King's axe dropped from his hands; he seized the shaft of the arrow and broke it off, and sank down helpless and dying beside his Standard.

A band of the Normans, twenty in number, now rushed forward to seize the banner which the King was no longer able to defend. But if the King was helpless, there were still some of his guard able to wield weapons, and of these twenty, most gave their lives in payment for their daring. A few, however, reached the Standard and beat it down to the earth. They carried off the Dragon with them and left the body of the King, hewn and mutilated with sword wounds. Of all King Harold's guard not one was

left standing, but thane-like they lay on the field beside their king.

Thus did Duke William of Normandy win the great fight at the hill of Senlac, and thus fell one of the bravest of the race of the English. The Dragon of Wessex that many a time had led the armies of Alfred and of Athelstan to victory against the heathen Danes and Northmen now passed into the hands of a stranger, and the old kingdom of the English in England came to an end. But the ending itself was glorious, for never before had English bravery and loyalty shone out more clearly than they did in this last fight of King Harold. A new England was now to take the place of oldest England, in some ways a greater and stronger England than the Anglo-Saxons had ever known. It was a different England, however, for William of Normandy was not only the conqueror of the English people, but in the many years in which he ruled them as king, he became also their leader and the founder of their new greatness. With King Harold ends the oldest England of Hengest and Horsa and the Saxon invaders, and with William the First begins the new England of Norman knighthood and chivalry.

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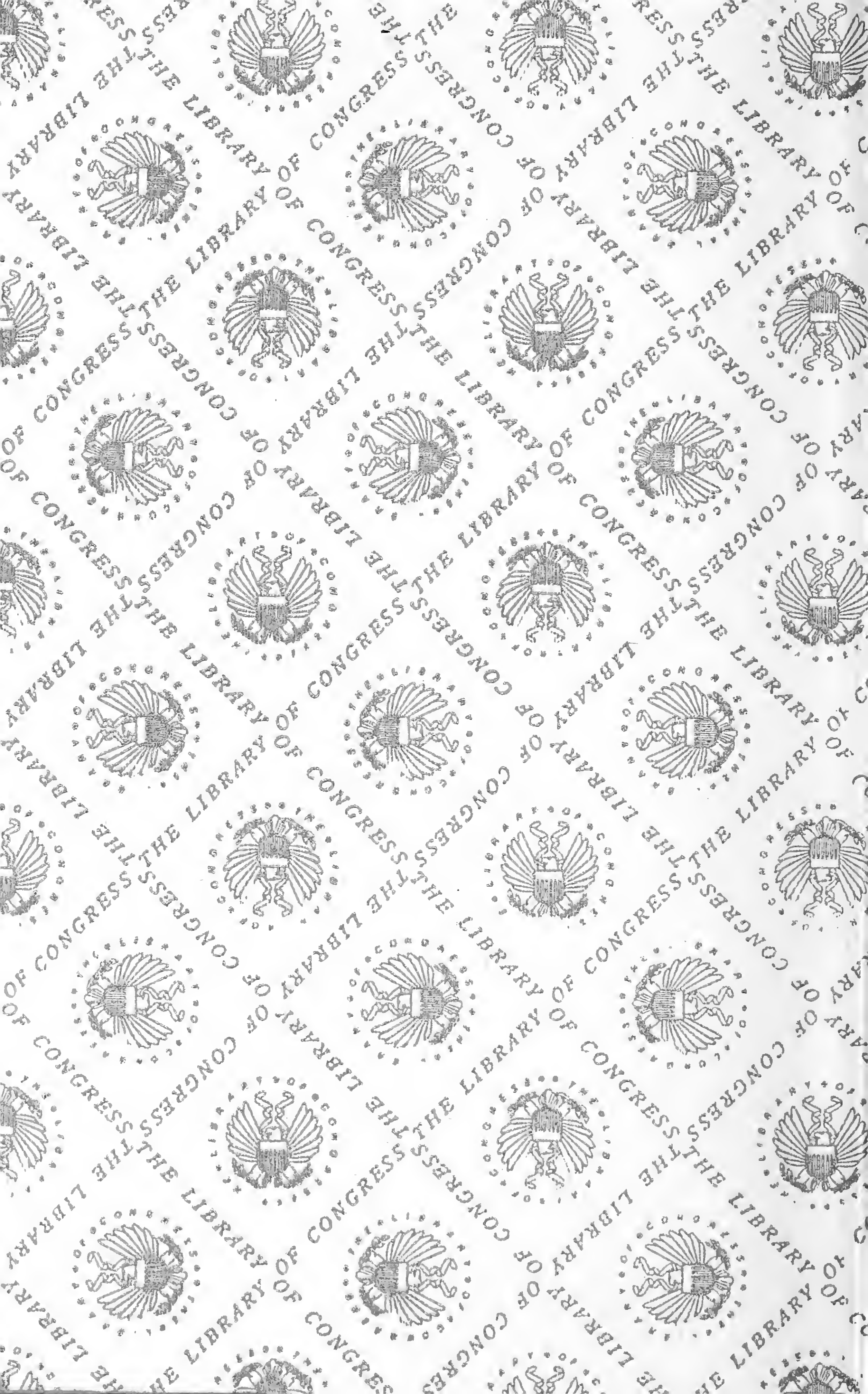

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